

SOUTH INDIAN HOURS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THAMES AND GODAVERY
(*Poems*)

Blackwell, 1920



PARROTS AND PHARISEES, MADURA TEMPLE.

South Indian Hours

By OSWALD J. COULDREY,

I.E.S. (Retd.) (*Sometime Principal of the Rajahmundry College.*)

*Author of "The Mistaken Fury," "Thames and
Godavery," etc. :: :: :: :: ::*

WITH 3 COLOUR AND 19 OTHER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

LONDON: HURST & BLACKETT, LTD.
PATERNOSTER HOUSE, E.C.

1924



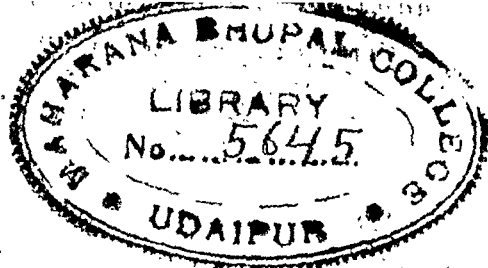
TO HIS SCHOLARS
AND TEACHERS
KAVIKONDALA VENKATA RAO
DAMERLA VENKATA RAO
ADIVI BAPIRAZU
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED
BY THEIR TEACHER
AND SCHOLAR



MAHARANA BHUPAL
COLLEGE,
UDAIPUR.

Class No......

Book No......



PREFACE

THE author of this work was in India for ten years from 1909, and Parts I. and II. were written there toward the end of that period. In 1919 he left India finally (as it turned out), owing to ill-health of a kind which later necessitated his being placed on the retired list. The third part of the book was written subsequently in England.

His acknowledgments are due to his friend, Mr. Adivi Bapirazu, for the account of a Hindu wedding contained in Chapter XIV.

CONTENTS

PART I.—WORKS AND DAYS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE - - - - -	vii
I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXILE - - - - -	13
II. A CORNER OF ASIA - - - - -	40
III. THE RAINY SEASON IN TELINGANA - - - - -	57
IV. SIMHĀCHALAM - - - - -	75
V. COROMANDEL FISHERS - - - - -	85
VI. THE COOL WEATHER - - - - -	93
VII. SERINGAPATNAM - - - - -	105
VIII. TROPIC SPRING - - - - -	122

PART II.—TEMPLES OF THE SOUTH

IX. THE TEMPLES OF THE SOUTH - - - - -	145
X. TIRUKALIKUNDRAM - - - - -	151
XI. CONJEEVERAM - - - - -	159
XII. MADURA - - - - -	165
XIII. CHIDAMBARAM - - - - -	180

PART III.—OTHER MOMENTS (AND SOME ETERNITIES)

XIV. THE WORLD AND THE FLESH - - - - -	195
XV. THE FRINGE OF THE JUNGLE - - - - -	234
XVI. THE FAR PAST - - - - -	259

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PARROTS AND PHARISEES, MADURA TEMPLE (*Colour Plate*)

Frontispiece

	<i>Facing page</i>
THE BASKET-BEARER - - - - -	36
THE REED MAT - - - - -	36
ON THE RIVER STAIRS : WAITING FOR MOTHER - - - - -	48
THE FIRST SIP - - - - -	48
THE BLUE BIRD - - - - -	56
THE DRAG-NET - - - - -	86
THE SANYASSI - - - - -	86
THE END OF THE RICEFIELD, ANAKAPALLE (<i>Colour Plate</i>)	94
TREADING OUT THE RICE - - - - -	106
THE HEART OF THE GARDEN (<i>Colour Plate</i>) - - - - -	122
THE BANYAN - - - - -	126
EVENING AT CHIDABARAM - - - - -	146
THE GATEHEAD - - - - -	164
CHARIOTS OF GOD - - - - -	180
ŚIVA AS NATARĀJA - - - - -	184
THE GOD'S BOUNTY - - - - -	188
A REDDI (SUDRA) BOY - - - - -	208
A BRAHMIN STUDENT - - - - -	208
BUFFALOES - - - - -	238
TEMPLE OF KRISHNA, VIJAYANAGAR - - - - -	258
KRISHNA AS VENUGOPĀLA - - - - -	280

PART I
WORKS AND DAYS

South Indian Hours

CHAPTER I

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXILE

I

A FRIEND of mine, drawing an epistolary bow at a venture, or oppressed perhaps for a time (this was in the days before the war) by the routine of English days grown stale, once wrote to say how much he envied me the chance of starting life afresh in a new world. I received this remark without enthusiasm at the time, for the wounds of separation from home were still fresh ; but I learned afterwards that my friend had achieved therein that almost uncanny wisdom, which sometimes rewards the man who dares to be commonplace. The lot of the Indian exile has been treated as a service, as an agony ; its curious veins have been diligently worked, its humorous aspects worn to the gruesome bone ; but it has too seldom been regarded in the light in which my own adventure leads me now chiefly to consider it, as an imaginative experience of the first and finest water. Enough has been said, perhaps, of the Pains of Exile. I have felt them as keenly as any, and could once have proclaimed them with bitterness enough. I propose now to say what I know of the consolation of the same condition.

It is a privilege to discover in ripe manhood, as the ordinary sojourner in Southern India discovers, a new world complete with all its frame and furniture, natural, civil, and supernatural ; it is delightful as well as illuminating to explore its various detail of novelty, its nature, manners, arts, religion, history ; it marvellously refreshes and expands a man to see and hear new pieties praised, new sins abhorred, new paradigms employed of thought and fancy, new measures of matter and of time, new tools of labour, and instruments of music ; while new seasons counterchange the year, each gratefully relieving another much as English seasons do, and each also as it rises rediscovering its own train of subtle memories, and links in that chain of natural piety which binds a good man's days.

Here nothing is as we have known it, except the heavenly bodies, and the human heart ; or if anything less universal prove the same, it appears with special strangeness, and reveals fresh vistas of romantic suggestion ; as when we find the first two days of the week—and those the very days that we so name—still called the sun's day and the moon's day, as if the mental eight-day clocks of West and East had been set right in Babylon ages ago, and had held their petty punctual count through all the changes and cataclysms of history. Or else the sight has for us the sweet elemental significance of certain minor incidents in Homer : as when a brown child under a palm-tree puts his hands over a playmate's eyes and asks him to guess his captor's name.

If we have brought with us any formed preference into this new world, and ' our loves remain ' in a sublunar after-life, we

may still pursue the same in essence, but under strange forms and marvellous disguises. Perhaps in England you have loved rivers, the country life, cathedrals ; you may find here, by banks not willowy, among palm-thatched cow-sheds, or under the shadow of some horned pagoda, the same poetic meaning, but uttered in another language ; only you must put aside the old symbols and acquire new, curious and beautiful in themselves, and able to voice old messages with enriched significance.

The perusal may at first appear monotonous, for the scholar has not yet learned to read. Among the confusion of moving ideographs before him, men, garments, gauds, coiffures, caste-marks, cattle and implements, palms and corn, post and pinnacle, cloud and sky-line, he is unable to recognise the name as it were and visual cipher of this and that ; of country thrift and urban foppery, cultured ease, and sacerdotal pride ; of the various colour of the hours, and passage of the seasons ; of the day before yesterday, and the age before the flood. But there is a strange zest in the acquisition of this language and outlandish character ; and when it is learned, life speaks to us as it spoke before, often as it never spoke before.

Should you be a follower of preciser studies, an entomologist, say, or humaner historian, or unfigurative learner of languages, you have the same fresh fields before you, and new worlds to conquer. To a mind of less than cyclopædic fathom, and apprehending better by suggestion than catalogue, it is especially delightful to study the accessories and harmless trifles of heathendom ; games different, yet how like those we used to play ; proverbs pointing the old lessons with unfamiliar

instances, nursery rhymes and fairy tales reproducing like toys in little the thought, shapes and circumstance of the larger wonderland.

It is, I believe, a Punjabi proverb which delightfully remarks, that if you live in the river, you should make friends with the crocodiles. 'You must expect to be misunderstood' says an oracle no less racy of our own palmy plains, 'if you drink your milk under a toddy-palm.' The meaning of the latter aphorism is apparent, and its flavour acceptable, only to one whom daily walks have made familiar with the sight and somewhat beery odour of the fresh toddy-juice, as it befoams the black lips of earthen jars at the foot of its fontal tree. I am not praising the saw's wit, but the pleasure which its local colouring affords a stranger.

I may perhaps be pardoned the annotations that accompany the next illustration. One of my scholars recently obtained a field-song from a peasant woman, whereof the first stanza runs thus in a country brogue of the Telugu :

'Kammori chinnodu chinni muvva
Kasulu Kantelu chinni muvva.'

The first two words mean a 'little Kamma fellow,' the Kammas being a caste of husbandmen ; an interesting caste, by the bye, who are said once to have borne princely rank in these parts. The words *chinni muvva*, which ring the burden of every line, signify a little brass rattle, or hollow bell-drop, such as, mixed with sea-shells, commonly decorate the collars and brow-bands of our labouring oxen. *Kasulu* (the original of 'cash')

is a necklace of gold coins and *kanti* is a golden torque, so that the lines mean, if we can call it a meaning :

‘ Little Kamma boy, little brass rattle,
Necklaces, collarets, little brass rattle.’

The second couplet begins ‘ little Velama lad,’ and enumerates two farther species of necklace ; the third begins *Bapanori Kurrodu*—a little Brahmin fellow. The rhyme thus calls its childish roll of all the local castes, assigning each its appropriate pair of ornaments (the vocabulary regarding which is seen to be extraordinarily precise and rich) and punctuates every line with the ding-dong-bell of the little brazen rattle.

The mere catalogue of castes and ornaments tickles that virtuoso's tastes for knacks and sociology, which residence in India tends to induce. I may, therefore, be wrong in fancying that this unmeaning doggerel catches something of the very spirit of our teeming pastoral countryside, with its love of children, jewellery and jingle. If I am, the rhyme will serve the better to illustrate the power of strangeness to create an interest in details apparently insignificant ; and how for exiles hard fact and circumstance do something to create the condition and confer the privilege (however incommunicable) of genius as defined by Coleridge, the power of preserving through a lifetime the freshness and wonder of experience.

II

But the philosophy of exile demands further exposition. I find that, in order to make reality altogether romantic,

another condition than novelty is needful, or at any rate *eminently* helpful; I mean that which occurs when we have already some acquaintance with the subject, but immaterial and remote; as by reflection from pictures seen in childhood, or memories copied from once-familiar books. When this condition is fulfilled, and the ideal becomes real, the state of fortunate exile acquires a transcendental quality, as of a Buddhist's transmigration, or liker the revisiting a former state of existence. Now South India, for all its strangeness, has pre-eminently this appeal to the imaginative memory, and as it were a kind of metaphysical recognition.

In South India we find a landscape thus endeared, first, for its own sake. Here, as tourists who stray into the 'benighted Presidency' discover with surprise, is 'the India of the picture books.' I do not mean the most up-to-date picture books, which are pre-occupied with the Taj and the Durbar, and the minarets of Muslim Delhi. I speak rather of old prints published in pre-Mutiny days, when the discovery of the classic Hindu culture was yet fresh, and its antiquity rather exaggerated; days of Bishop Heber and the painter Daniell, of Southey's epics and Goethe's epigram about Sakuntala; days when the memory had not faded of our first arrival in the Peninsula.

There long ago as in dreams we saw, and thought we had forgotten, the 'palms and temples of the South'; the tall, shock-headed 'palmer,' and drooping ray-fronds of the oil-palm; high tiara-towers of Dravidian temples ('pagodas' we called them), and stone pools framed with stairs, and

crowned with pagan cloisters ; broad plains, and clear horizons wrung with singular and sudden hills ; rivers, wide inland estuaries, wherein the saltless tides are at ebb for half the year ; flocks of lop-eared sheep and goats ; curvilinear Deccan cattle, curious and graceful as antelopes, or majestic as Assyrian minotaurs (these we called ' zebus,' a word I have not found in India, except in Pierre Loti) ; bare brown limbs of Southern labourers, intellectual faces also, pencilled eyebrows, dark-set eyes adream with unfamiliar creeds, and calm with remote philosophies ; all this we recognised, all this we found to have somehow grown familiar, before we saw it with the bodily eye.

But the categorical and only not innate Ideas, that canonise for us the Indian spectacle, rest on higher authority than these old books of travel and romance. Scripture, and the hardly less sacred lore and art of Greece, have spoken something of the same theme, and themselves receive a new significance in the light of its realisation. Here to this day may be seen Rebecca with her poised pitcher at the well, and Ruth gleaning after the reapers ; the two women grinding together, and the ox that treadeth out the corn. In every field, when the maize waves man-high in January, the watcher wields a sling like David's ; on every suburb road, kites and crows harry the baskets borne aloft by marketers, like the ravens in the dream of Pharaoh's baker. In every considerable temple, squares of graded sanctity surround the Holy Place, and the porches of the Court of the Gentiles are clamorous and shabby with the shops of them that buy and sell.

Ancient Egypt, whether by accident, hidden influence, or

substantial analogy, is suggested with special vividness and frequency. The temple gate-heads bear an odd resemblance to Egyptian pylons, and some of the brass bowls and sacrificial spoons are said to follow the very fashion of those used once in Thebes and Memphis. There is a close parallel between the very gods of here and there ; between the bull Apis and the bull Nandi, the dog Anubis and the monkey Hanuman, the hawk Horus and Garuda, the hawk-vehicle of Vishnu.

From the Bible we may pass to Herodotus, and thence to Hesiod and Theocritus, and still South India supplies her live and frequent commentary. I think Hesiod would recognise our agricultural methods, and 'works of men and oxen,' and the very fashion of our wooden ploughs. With us the shepherd's pipe is no literary convention, but a pretty commonplace of springtime, as it was in Cos and Sicily. One of the figures the most familiar to our fields is the youthful piping neat-herd, slight ruler of grisly buffaloes and monumental oxen. A silly and poor child, he yet wears a double grace ; and goes clothed softly in very little else, but the poetry of your Greek Daphnis, and the bucolic divinity of our Indian Krishna.

Greek art illustrates our Indian world better than India's own art, and almost as aptly as her own old poetry. How many times have I seen in these fields the very figure and attitude, and only not the very unclothed innocence, of that little Capitoline statue, which represents a shepherd boy pulling a thorn from his foot ! In England, were it not for statuary, one would hardly know what a human shoulder was like, or the shape of 'any man's legs.' But in the warm air of

Southern India the beauty of the human body daily appears in Myronic nudity ; and common folk unwittingly assume the languid grace of Praxitilean poses, their loose clothes droop and rumple and fold into Pheidian modulations.

One realises here how much the modern European costume hampers modern European art, and relishes the less that bleached, shivering and secret nakedness of the studio, out of which European artists pathetically strive to fashion their criticism of life. We must not forget in this connection that uncompromising and brown gymnosopher, the Indian baby ; so much happier than his European brother in this regard, that he appears almost universally beautiful to the casual eye. But nowadays certain fashionable folk have taken to putting him into socks and smocks, just as his elders, in the name of civilisation, are beginning to truss themselves in uncomfortable, useless, ugly and expensive suits. The day no doubt will dawn when South India, schooled by the Missionary West, will have lost this primal privilege of clean, sane, seemingly nakedness ; and some sage will arise from his ash, and see her hideously disguised, and with a wry smile ask : ' O Jumbudvipa ! who told thee that thou wert naked ? '

Here poetry is still current coin, and *chanted* ; many a time have my scholars asked me whether Wordsworth were meant to be merely spoken, like a piece of common prose. Here music still finds her chiefest seat and sweetest instrument in the human voice, and such slender accompaniment of strings and pipe as prevailed in Greece and older Syria ; and though so simply furnished outwardly, is still endowed with a greater

number of diversely significant 'moods' than Ionian, Phrygian, Dorian, Lydian, gave to Greece, and more than all the scales of Gregorian plain-song.

But it would be possible to continue almost indefinitely the list of institutions and implements yet in common use in India, which Europe only retains as figures in her art and fossils in her language. The walled city, the need and use of roads and horses, the potter's wheel, the weaver's beam, the bridal palankeen and the funeral pyre; plain words for spades, and a currency of moral advice and profession not limited, as with us, to the pulpit and the newspaper article on international affairs; respect for persons, and abuses alas! such as the Psalmist wept for and even Shakespeare knew, but we have forgotten; epic disasters also, fear of the plague, the famine and the flood, and a thousand other old-fashioned banes and blessings, social and elemental; region kites and carrion crows, cock-fighting and calligraphy, decentralisation, handicraft, astrology, and religion; all the properties, pomp and circumstance of the old age are here to be studied in the twentieth century.

III

That century in Europe yearns over the memory of its predecessors with an odd home-sickness, as a growing youth sometimes looks back upon his boyhood. Ruskin has speculated as to the meaning of this pathetic regard, which he attributes to an instinctive sense of the overwhelming ugliness of modern things. Perhaps it is not so much because they are

ugly, as because they are new, that we seek sometimes to leave them behind ; for I suppose the world and all its ways were never so extensively and suddenly altered as during the course of the nineteenth century. Be the reason what it may, the fact remains of the existence of that wistful curiosity, which may nowhere be so easily gratified as in India to-day. I think we English, who hold India, are not enough conscious of the nature and value of this aspect of the treasure, and facet, as it were, of the jewel which has come into our keeping.

It is perhaps not wonderful that the English actually resident in India should be slow to realise her wonder and beauty. The climate is vexatious and home far away, and the mind not readily persuaded of the happiness of that condition which is laid upon it by necessity. That many, alas ! never acquire the habit of admiration at all is less excusable, for here is a mystery that may be learned. I speak from personal experience of defect and cure alike. During the first year of my exile I frankly loathed the Indian sunlight. The expected palms and kiosks gave me small delight, I could see only the drought and the corrugated iron, and lamented that my lot had been cast among the waste places and ash-bins of the earth.

I was early attached, I remember, to the office of the Inspector of Schools, Tanjore. What a designation ! One might as well have to do with the Town Clerk of Ephesus. But the whimsicality was lost upon me in those days, and so was much of the charm of that ancient city. I sought romance in Kashmir, and afterwards with less success (for it was too much like my

prison) in Ceylon, and finally Japan. There in the midst of my virtuoso's transports, I heard an unresty Polack, who had spent a week in Colombo, sigh for the romance of the tropics. Upon this hint I managed the next year to discover the ideal Ceylon, shall we call her Taprobane? Meeting as I returned thence a Danish enthusiast about to visit India for the first time, I was by him directed to the ideal country of the Hindus, found it in his company, and have lived there off and on, as they say, ever since.

For, as I now remember, this ideal India is an elusive quest, and, like peace of mind, not to be enjoyed without perseverance, faith, reverence and philosophy. Peevishness begotten of tropic heat, homesickness and staling custom trouble the mind of the student; yet not much this last, for the Englishman abroad generally carries about with him enough of his own atmosphere to preserve the stranger's nimbus. But the gramophone, the kerosene oil tin, and apish imitation of the West daily encroach upon, disfigure and conceal the object of contemplation. The vision itself in its purity is ineffably shy; for between Hinduism and the outer world there is a great gulf fixed, which it cannot pass without losing something of its pristine virtue. In order to converse with a profane century it puts on, in a mixture of diffidence and misdirected condescension, incongruous, gaudy, shabby and vulgar garbs of half-achieved modernity; so that one catches only glimpses of its genuine and ancient figure.

This morning I met the funeral procession of a high caste woman being carried out of the gate of the large missionary

hospital which adjoins my paddock. A wailing troop of white-robed mourners waited for it on the road. A Brahmin carried the funeral fire swung in a brazen bowl before the bier, whereon the pale dead lady lay, wrapped in a yellow robe and wearing all her jewellery, a dignified and matronly figure to the end. The male relatives followed after, Brahmins from the heart of the country, a very resurrection of the past ; old men covered with a mantle, venerable beards, and masses of silver hair coiled and knotted after the fashion of the ancient sages ; such a procession of sacred and correct antiquity as astonished me after seven years in India.

On another occasion, riding through a side street, I beheld one Krishniah, a youth with whom I have read Shakespeare and played hockey, pass through one of the lateral galleries of the rambling house in which, with a whole generation of his tribe, he lives. The lad's skin was of a golden colour, as they describe the body of a Buddha ; for he wore only a single garment of dark purple silk, loosely girt about his loins, and looked like an apparition of the young god, his namesake. I hailed him, and presently he appeared at the outer door covered with confusion and a tennis shirt, the latter much frayed in the washing and worn as an overall. He will tell you that the change was made as a mark of respect ; and so perhaps it was ; but it is an observance which one cannot waive ; for his robe of purple silk was the garment of the dinner hour, for which even the city Brahmin reserves that habit of ceremonial and jealous secrecy, in which his country cousin moves perpetually. The dinner garment is never worn in the street,

and must at all costs be saved from the pollution that flies in the air about a casteless foreigner.

No doubt the Englishman, who attempts the quest of which I speak, often stands in his own light. Engaged myself in what my friend Weaving, with a poet's direct candour, calls the task

‘ Of turning Indians into Englishmen ’

I cannot cherish, with Pierre Loti, the pretty fancy of an ‘ India without the English.’ We others must beat our music out in a graver key. Since we have undertaken, we say, to restore the structural soundness of a lovely ruin, let us, in the spirit of a good archæological department, but in a harder task—for we have to make the relic habitable and useful as well as lasting—preserve as much as may be of its ancient beauty.

Follow my advice, you Philistine and uninitiate into the hidden mysteries of beauty; sundried bureaucrat or moon-demanding Indian modernist, who turn up your nose at what you are pleased to consider an æsthetic pedantry! Like an ungodly statist encouraging religion, you will find your own gaunt ends served better than you know. Think twice before you assume that English garments, English furniture, English social and religious properties, English hours of business, and English forms of law and government, are best for India, because we have made a tolerable shift with them in the north-west corner of Europe.

IV

I have ascribed the different stages of my initiation into the mysteries of Major Asia to a Pole and a Dane respectively, and I cannot help thinking that essential India, Hindu India, has of late been less in the general thought and eye of England than it might have been ; less perhaps than it was before the middle of the last century, certainly less than it has been for some time in those of America, France and Germany. What remark has Tennyson, for instance, of our Indian culture ? What Browning, for all his delight in the rank backwaters of history ? What Landor, Ruskin or Carlyle ? Which of our great names is associated with India like Schopenhauer's, or even by so romantic and delicate a thread, as Goethe ? Max Muller's, perhaps.

So much have the Hindus themselves been persuaded of the greater interest taken by the Germans especially in their ancient culture, that it was commonly reported here among half-educated people at the beginning of the war, that the Germans had merely stolen from the Hindu Shastras the science and method which gave them their initial successes !

Meanwhile our touring painters linger in the Moslem North, and sentimental travellers only admire what reminds them of the Arabian Nights. Some of our Anglo-Indian novelists admit even less of authentic Indian daylight through the print Venetian shutters of their fashionable pages. We are lucky if they deign occasionally to divert us with the quaint English of the lower office, or African superstitions of the kitchen. Mr.

Kipling, poet-laureate in this kind, vigorously proclaims the poetry of the barrack and the rather jaded romance of the hill station and the P. and O. liner ; but in order to ' hear the East a-callin' ' he must cross the bay to Rangoon. He glances once or twice indeed (in what I sometimes think his best book) at the tragic chivalry of Rajputana ; but when he wishes to represent the ' spirituality ' of the Orient he chooses for his purpose a Buddhist ' bonze ' from over the border. Even Sir Edwin Arnold, who once confessed an ambition to ' popularise the Indian classics,' made his boldest bid for glory in the name of Buddhism.

To Buddhism likewise resort for the most part those who like to prop open their doors with Oriental idols, or have begun to look Eastward for a new religion. With the religious revivalist and seeker of romance alike, unqualified Hinduism, that scriptural and classic world of wide ablution-stairs, and pontifical towers, and immemorial ordinance, of simple homes and extravagant theosophies, plain living and high thinking—is hopelessly out of vogue, and considered a fit field only for the missionary.

That the traveller is missing his opportunity in a changing world I have no doubt ; and a case might be made out for a similar charge against the revivalist himself. What a magnificent welter of poetic and genial superstition is popular Hinduism ! Nay, the apologist's intellectual self-respect itself is almost saved by the operation upon this chaos of the greatest system of religious symbolism in the world. Englishmen rarely mark this interpretation, because they rarely understand it.

The Brahmin realises that a religion must not rise too far above the stature of its votaries, if it is to serve them at all. He is not shocked by the worship of wood and stone, for God, he says, is everywhere. In giving a beautiful significance to the humblest superstitions, can we be assured that he is doing no more than countenance their degradation ?

To me the Brahmins' general attitude seems eminently shrewd, genial, broad-minded and (one might almost say) modern. But if the iconoclastic humour is to prevail, what Jew has given it more eloquent utterance than Kapila and Vemana, poets of the South ? Esoteric Hinduism has no more to fear than Buddhism from a comparison with the Athanasian Creed. It may be hoped that Reformation, when it comes, will not be too severe. Purified Buddhism is almost as dull as the New Theology, and Hinduism has much 'carved work' to lose. When I think of the devotion which wakes in the mind even of educated Hindus, men far above any literal and slavish superstition, at the thought of such beautiful fictions of their faith as Rama and Krishna, I cannot regard the like as lumber.

Meanwhile the churches of the missionaries are needed less than their schools and hospitals. When I first came to my present station, I once heard a labourer singing loudly as he walked home at evening along Godavery bank. I asked my companion what was the subject of his song. He is singing, I was told, of the greatness of God. Now such songs in the mouth of such people you may hear in India every day. I do not wish to make more of this fact than it is worth. The Indian

labourer need not be represented in an aureole. But fancy a normal British workman beguiling the way home by singing of the greatness of God !

v

To search the Sanskrit canon in order to gather, sift and classify the various conceptions mythological, theological and philosophical of the Brahmanic system is the humour of a pundit, and requires an enterprise and accomplishments to which I make no claim. I prefer to study such notions as they operate in the thought of ordinary people in India to-day, and to have my divinity at second-hand. The Hindus are always ready to entertain an interested stranger with stories from the Epics and Puranas ; fantastic legends, and generally lacking the sober human homeliness of our own Bible stories ; fairy tales rather, in which the miraculous machinery has yet a grand metaphysical significance ; and grotesque fables, fraught with a moral as beautiful as the Sermon on the Mount. They preach, because they assume, the excelling virtue of renunciation and devotion, the supreme creative and cognitive efficacy of the unaided mind and will, the entire subordination of the visible world thereto, and many another characteristic notion, such as you may find perhaps in Plotinus or Hegel, but hardly in Hans Andersen or Ovid, and rarely (the moral kind excepted) in the Bible itself.

The plastic art of India offers another way of theological study, delightful to anyone who has not imbibed too deeply

the old Hebrew prejudice against idolatry. Indian sages look upon the worship of images with indulgent eyes ; only some hold that it tends to induce re-births, an opinion which cheery souls perhaps regard as a recommendation. In South India art is little else but idol-making. A quaint mystery this, and half-way house between Greek art and Australasian fetishism ; heiratic, symbolical ; grotesquely, portentously sublime, and of power almost to reconcile a Hellenist with the imagery of the Book of Revelation. This art peoples with a swarm of idols the stone walls and galleries of temple courts, and plasters the gatehead towers almost beyond the reach of pilgrims' eyes. Not the faith only, we may remark in passing, but the history of India is writ large in stone. The tale unfolded by her crumbling monuments from Kashmir to Java has yet to be set forth in words.

A more intimate pleasure than such public sights afford lies in the discreet collection of household idols, little brazen teraphim such as nowadays occasionally find their way into the bazaars, or can be obtained (but this is rare) by secret private treaty. These repeat in conscientious and often exquisite miniature the solemn postures and attributes of the full-blown Abominations, which dwell darkling in Holies of Holies, and can only be seen by a Gentile, if at all, on the occasion of their annual airing in the processional car.

These little gods have still a particle of life in them, and are not safely to be regarded as mere curios. I have long had in my possession a small brass bell, the handle of which is cast in the shape of the monkey Hanuman. It was designed for use

in the ritual of Vaishnava household worship ; but I have been in the habit of using it as a table bell. I asked a young scholar of mine in what light he regarded this profanation. Now he happened to have been reading a poem on the fall of Babylon. He replied with perfect good humour, but I could not fail to feel his unintentional rebuke, and the shadow of a menace which, I believe, was beyond his meaning. ' It reminds me, sir, of the sin of Belshazzar ! '

I had lately a happier experience of the same kind. I bought in Madras a handsome old copper image of Krishna, the Sacred Babe, lying on his back and holding his toe in his mouth ; a very popular figure in South India to-day. This figure, which is said to have been brought from the women's apartments of the Tanjore Palace, now lies in state upon a lotus-leaf, daily renewed, in a corner of my front verandah. The other day I found under its head a half-sheet of notepaper, whereon was written in Sanskrit the following anathematic :

' Who clasps with Lotus Hand His Lotus Foot
And brings it near His Lotus Face
And lies upon the Banyan Leaf,
Him, the Child-God, I inwardly adore.'

I found out later that the college pundit, a formidable scholar, had had occasion that morning to wait for half an hour in my verandah. Not finding me at home, he calls for paper, and takes me this beautiful old pagan means at once to honour the god, and intimate the fact of his attendance.

This idol-worship of the Hindus, whenever one comes across it, seems to carry one back at once into the heart of history.

Last night people were gathering in the twilight about a trolley, that had come to a halt with its burden at the side of the road leading past the college to the main bazaar. It carried a huge granite figure of the Nandi, or sacred bull of Siva, evidently fresh from the sculptor's yard. The idol was carved in the posture, proportions and appointments prescribed by master-sculptors from of old. The limbs of the recumbent monster were disposed in a natural and stately posture, but the anatomy was roundly simplified, the legs like folded columns; whether from a failure to observe, or wish to elevate nature, or both, might fitly be a subject of dispute between Dr. Coomaraswamy and Mr. Vincent Smith.* Someone had added a collar and bridle of yellow flowers to the elaborate harness already carved in stone. From the talk of the bystanders I gathered that the work had been prepared in the shop of a stone-cutter (which I had once visited) in a neighbouring village, and was on its way to the quays of Dhowlaishwaram at the head of the canals, whence it would be carried 'in an iron boat' to a great Siva temple in the delta country.

The comments of the crowd about this carted idol were pleasant hearing. A goldsmith, who being an artist himself was a little envious, and differed from the rest in regarding the work as nothing above the ordinary, found fault with the cutting of the elbow; but whether because of its angularity, or that he thought the feature ought not to have been there at all, I could not well make out. His judgment

* I have allowed this poor little joke to stand, though the second of these distinguished scholars is now, I fear, beyond its reach.

was challenged by the man in charge of the trolley, who tried to shift the debate into a quarter where he felt more certain of his facts, by praising the sculpture of the harness ; to which the goldsmith retorted by declaring that the knee of the animal was liker a man's than a bull's, and took himself off. The crowd was characteristically curious about the cost of the work, which was said to amount to three hundred rupees. One man maintained that the sum was not enough, and that the artist should receive at least a thousand ; while another qualified this, and considered five hundred rupees a fairer figure. A poor grass-cutter paused beneath her load and surveyed the beast with open mouth. ' Why,' she exclaimed in a plaintive drawl, ' they have made it out of a stone ! ' Was this the whole of her audible and slow perception, or did some eternal platitude, and higher critical truth about all idols, flicker for a moment and go out within her dank and weedy brain ? Such thoughts formed themselves at least in mine, but meanwhile the recurring question of the price was settled by the sentence of a devout old man, who declared that so blessed a work could never be adequately paid for.

VI

We spoke before of brazen images. Brass and its kindred alloys bear an important part in the simple equipment of old South Indian homes. The recital of their various usages makes a catalogue tantalising to the virtuoso. In brass is fashioned all the furniture of sacrifice and worship, and many articles

more purely domestic (the two spheres are less sharply separate than they are in the West) ; lamps, ladles, pitchers, pans, toys ; nut-crackers, and the other several implements associated with the ritual of the betel ; all variously suggestive in figure of extinct civilisations, and often rich with the flora and fauna of the Indian craftsman's imagination. The metal has probably supplanted in many instances an earlier use of earthenware, the potters' world, which is still largely extant, especially among the poor.

The mind of the past is also widely and eloquently carved in wood ; witness temple cars, and the doors, lintels, posts and beams of the older houses. Basketware, cane of the bamboo, coir-fibre and the various products of the local palm, furnish yet another characteristic group of implements in immemorial use. The pages of old books, which are shaped like a broadish foot-rule, are made of dried palmyra leaves.

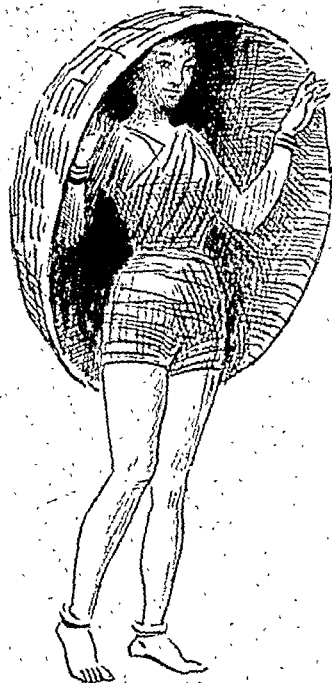
This employment of materials comparatively unsophisticated and smelling of the wild, this acceptance of the immediate ministrations of nature, is one of those pleasant features of ancient life, which the West has almost lost. For plates at meals the orthodox Hindus employ fresh leaves, whether single of the lotus and plantain, or stitched leaves of the banyan ; sewing fig leaves together, as Adam and Eve made aprons. Ah, beautiful old world ! doomed, I fear, too soon to disappear before the march of easy Luxury and self-torturing Fashion, leagued with a foolish Pride and yet a more foolish Shame ; before the invasion of the tropics by stiff collars, and the ' general raising of the standard of comfort ! ' Let me praise

you a little before you go, there are so few, even of your own children, who praise you. I wish my words could arrest or delay your passage, if only for a little while.

VII

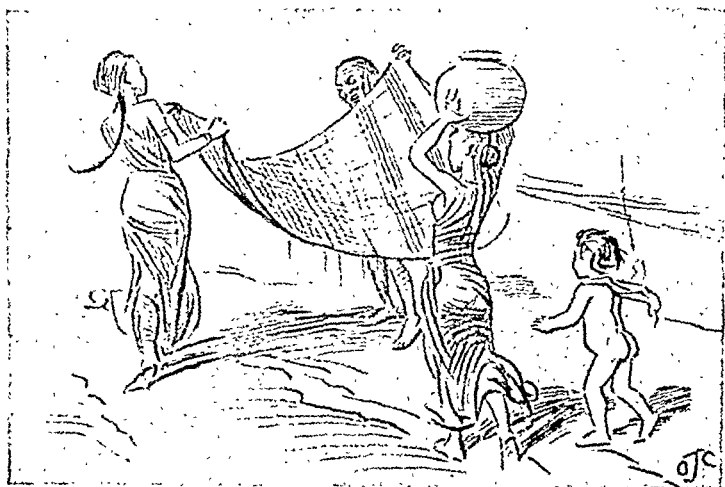
I have said much of the fascination of novelty ; but very dear also to the exile are the links that bind his Indian circumstance to the world he knew before. He delights to discover the name of a Dravidian river in his Pliny, and to read in old Greek characters a syllable, it may be, of the Telugu. He pores upon the tales of former European travellers in Asia, from Cosmas to Bernier, and regards with special fondness Milton's very inaccurate verse-picture of the Banyan-tree. All thoughts and things which derive from India he treasures in fancy the more dearly, as they have past current longer in the West, and become a more intimate parcel of its mind and life. And because these migrations best appear to the philologist, he ransacks the records of that science, in order to know what Indian words have passed into the English language, and are understood of the untravelled Englishman.

I feel sure that the titles of the tiger and the elephant, could they be traced back far enough, would prove to have been bestowed by Adam in an Indian tongue. The specific half of the word peacock is proved old Tamil, thus indicating the whereabouts of Ophir ; and Solomon's almug trees are likewise suspected of being so called in slubbered Sanskrit. The names of many gems and spices, such as sapphire, pearl, beryl,



THE BASKET-BEARER.

Probably a mason's assistant, the basket being used to carry mortar or other material.



THE REED MAT.

It has apparently been taken by the family to the village tank to be washed.

curry, rice, cheroot, ginger, mulligatawny, catamaran, coolie, pariah, teak and coir. Cash, mongoose and bandicoot are Telugu. But I must not longer regale the reader with the secrets of that store of inexhaustible romance (if I may so describe without impugning its veracity), Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. I will therefore cite but one other example, which, while apposite to our immediate question, will yet serve to gather and compose to a seemly end the scattered threads of the chapter as a whole.

It is symbolical of British ignorance and indifference in things Indian, that the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is at a loss to decide out of what age and country chess originally came. Now anybody who has read the scripture knows that the game was invented by the wife of the demon Ravana, in order to beguile the tedium of the days during the siege of her husband's capital by Rama. A glance at the derivations in the *New English Dictionary*, which redeems the shame of her sister Megalosaur, will place the truth of the legend beyond question, or thereabouts. In fact the game of chess illustrates in a curiously complete manner all that we have said about words, and links, and games, and old, and new.

The word is Sanskrit, an Indo-European word of the first class, acclimatised, familiar, long unbewrayed, and yet authentic. In our part of the world they use to this day the original word *chaturanga*, which means 'four arms'; and one realises that chess is nothing else than the Hindu war game of the fourth century before Christ, and the chess-board a mimic battle-field, in which soldier-princes loved to dispose the four

arms of classic Indian war : elephants, chariots, horsemen and footmen. To these four add the King and his Minister, and we possess not only all the pieces of the chess game as played in India throughout the ages, but practically all the important persons and estates of the ancient Hindu polity as it appears in the *Atha-sastra* or Politics of Kautilya 'the Indian Machiavelli'; himself the minister of king Chandragupta, and a contemporary of Alexander. Our queen, bishops, and castles are of course merely Gothic translations of those unknown Indian powers. The Indian game to this day reads minister for queen, chariots for bishops, elephants for castles.

Everyone will see how much the significance of the game is enriched by the restoration of the original symbols. Bishops, no doubt, were not unknown on Gothic battle-fields; but the resourceful prowess of the queen Amazon is out of the picture in any case, and the marching castles only become intelligible, when upon a nearer view they come to life as battle-elephants, 'endorsed with towers.' I doubt whether any invention of the human brain has carried the impress of a single race and age, its institutions and habits, so far across the regions and the centuries with so little defacement of its original figure.

That race and early age attained also a singular and lonely glory in art and thought. Its contribution to the rest of the world in these higher spheres yet waits to be traced, or at least determined; the game remains, and its authorship is at length acknowledged. It is possible that the worthier message, long preserved and ready to hand, remains in part still undelivered.

CHAPTER II

A CORNER OF ASIA

I

WHAT remains of the old Indian life has two main aspects, the religious, and the agricultural. For the rest, the romance of Indian war, so long unwilling to be altered, is diminished and altered now ; and indigenous industries, other than agriculture, are fast disappearing, alas ! in the fact of Western mechanical competition. The bazaar, that appears at first like an avenue into the Thousand Nights, will be found upon inspection to be chiefly stacked from Brummagem. The inner apartments of the home no doubt still afford sanctuary to the spirit of the past ; but even there, they say, the foreign mode is entering, though the foreigner is excluded. Agriculture and religion remain much what they were a millenium since. British policy encourages, but cannot reform the one ; has sought to spare, and is only unconsciously undermining the other.

In order to give the reader a glimpse of Indian country life, I propose to describe in some detail the little nook of

Indian earth best known to me. Religion will best be studied in the courts of the great temples further south, whither in due time we will make pilgrimage.

For the present, therefore, let the reader imagine himself a dweller in the neighbourhood of a large up-country town situated on the banks of sea-blue Godavery, at the point where that ancient river is crossed by the railway line from Calcutta to Madras. Perhaps it would have been better to have broken away from the railway altogether ; but that is not our fortune. As it is we can go southward to Madras in a night, and northward to Calcutta in a day and a night ; and are, say, thirty miles from the sea.

We are in that region of India known to later history as the Northern Circars, but which our Indian neighbours, conscious of a vague but proud tradition of ancient empire, prefer to speak of as the Andhra country. They talk Telugu, the northernmost and farthest-spread and sweetest-sounding of the four great Dravidian tongues. Of Hindustani, the lingua franca of the north, they know little. Between Northern and Southern India there is in the matter of language a great gulf fixed. In the North the dialects, like Hindustani itself, are mostly of Sanskrit origin ; whereas the languages of the South have generally indeed a strong Sanskrit superstructure, like the Latin words in English, but the basement is older.

Otherwise, if a parallel is to be drawn between English and Indian history, these mysterious Dravidians represent rather the Celts than the Saxons ; and like them still keep their languages alive in the extremities of the country remote from

the continent.* With most of the other Dravidians, we belong to the Madras Presidency ; but our dearest ambition is to be made into a province of our own, which shall be called the Andhra Province.

At the place of which I speak, the River Godavery, which here flows due south, is nearly two miles across. The country is flat, with a few low, red, and sudden hills, the last scatter of the Eastern Ghâuts, which themselves make a blue border to the half-horizon whence the river flows. The soil is velvet-black in the open plain, red about the hills, and near the river a nondescript alluvial ochre. If you want romantic scenery, tiger-shooting, or malaria, you should borrow an officer's house-boat, and allow yourself to be towed, sailed, or poled up the river forty miles, where the said river threads a magnificent gorge of the forest-clad Eastern Ghauts. These house-boats, however, make more usual and useful voyages in the tranquil waters, and through the milder landscape of the Delta, which lies in the other direction.

For six miles below the railway bridge four islands rise in

* By the four great (there are others) Dravidian languages I mean Telugu, Canarese, Tamil and Malayali. Of these, Telugu is spoken from the Chilka lake (in the south of Orissa) to a point not far north of Madras, and as far inland as the centre of the Peninsula, where it 'marches' with the country of Canarese speech. The Tamil country begins in the neighbourhood of Madras and extends to the southern point of India ; Malayali is spoken over a much smaller area of the west coast. These sister-languages are non-Aryan, and have no certain affinity with any other known family. Scholars call them Dravidian from Dravida, the North Indian name for Tamil, which was the first of the Dravidian languages by many centuries to develop a literature. The oldest Tamil poetry dates from the beginning of our era, the earliest extant Canarese from the ninth century A.D., and Telugu from the eleventh. The inscriptions of the Andhra dynasty, which ruled in the Telugu country in the first and second centuries A.D., are in Prakrit.

the river ; not the shifting, sandy shoals such as the river gathers and re-arranges annually, like a small god studying geography, but steadfast, wooded, horizon-crowning islands, visible afar and blue. Here the river divides herself (for she is of the feminine gender ; I am explaining the pronoun, not the action) into what presently resolve themselves as two parts, one of which is again sub-divided later ; and here from shore to shore between the islands, a distance of four miles altogether, is held up by a great dam known as the Dowlaish-waram Anicut, or water-band. The water thus arrested is distributed in canals throughout the Delta, which has thus become one of the most fertile regions of the Presidency.

The Delta is a world apart, a land of placid rice-fields and cocoanut-fronds, of calm canals, lock-punctuated, of waving plaintain-leaves, and areca-palm plantations white-stemmed, graceful and regular as temples of the garden-gods ; a land where folk live who have never seen a hill, a landscape rich for all that in change and mystery by reason of its many leaves and groves, and long waterways that lead the eye straight into infinity. Most of the Delta country consists of what is known as ' wet ' land. In such the staple crop is rice, or as it is more precisely styled in the growing stage, paddy, which requires to be planted and partly grown in standing water. This is derived from the canals, and retained upon the fields by means of a frame-work of small banks or ' bunds ' ; an intricate and rectangular clay geometry, which covers the whole face of the land.

Much of the up-country near the hills, where the land slopes

and large reservoirs can be easily made with retaining earth-works, belongs to the same category, though less valuable, because the reservoirs supply less water, and less constantly, than the canals. The lands of the open plain, which are watered direct from heaven, are known as 'dry' lands; as we pray God for peace, because there is none other that fighteth for us. These tracts grow for the most part various grams and maizes.

In trying to convey an idea of the aspect of the country, I am confronted with the difficulty that my subject changes with the seasons, and I am at a loss whether to follow the order of space, or time. Perhaps a short account of the seasons would best suggest the features of our rural landscape. Before we proceed thereto, I propose to attempt a theme less volatile, and conduct the disembodied reader to a few places of interest in our country town itself.

II

Had the visitor in my charge, instead of an etherialised and perhaps entirely imaginary English reader with romantic expectations, been a solid rustic from the Delta, with bare brown torso, and huge creaking sandal-shoon of country leather, the sights chosen would certainly have been the Railway Bridge, the Judge's Court, the Municipal Museum, with its stuffed animals, the Arts College, where they stuff men, the squat European bungalows that crown, like an anticlimax, the remnant of the old fort wall above the river; these and similar manifestations of the new order, and of that ultra-Hellenic

severity in architecture which distinguishes the Public Works Department. For us it will almost be enough to know that they are here, and to pass in search of more acceptable imaginative pabulum in the neighbourhood of the bazaar, the temple, and the river stairs.

And yet perhaps the great Bridge, though it be of the age of iron, ought not to be left without some notice ; and perhaps I do wrong to speak thus lightly of the Public Works Department, seeing that the three great works, which dominate the neighbourhood, and that in a manner not unworthy of the land's dæmonic masonry, are theirs ; I mean the Bridge, the Town Bund, and the Dowlaishwaram Anicut. The Anicut and the Bund are Indian in conception as in name, and fit themselves more readily into the Indian scheme than a railway bridge with iron girders ; but the last is too big, too useful, and even perhaps in its unconscious Western way too beautiful, not to have become long since an integral part of our life. The sight of country craft lying, dwarfed and rude, under the shoreward span, of rust-red nets drying in the sun upon the neighbouring shoal, suggests only a pleasant piquancy of contrast. The Bridge is nearly two miles long, and has five-and-fifty piers, which would resemble the castles of a giant chess-board, save that, in deference to the stream's direction, the roundness of them has been pressed into an ellipse. This gives them something of the ship's grace, and joins to their aspect of stability a sense almost of speed ; and indeed in flood time, though stable in earth, they cleave the 'red water' at the rate of many knots an hour.

By many little whims and familiarities this cumbersome Novelty has long since endeared itself to the ancient East around it. In the marriage season, when the town is a-splutter with fire-works, its regiment of towers will sometimes reiterate the shot of the rockets in a veritable *feu de joie*. It has a more familiar and frequent voice besides, matching by fits the steady diapason of the Anicut ; for the roar of trains upon the Bridge, when the wind is favourable, carries far into the northern jungles, and leopards might regulate their habits by the mail's passing, if it were not so often late. For myself, I listen for that voice exactly as I used to do, in boyhood, for that of the Black Bridge at Newnham, in Oxfordshire : a coincidence pleasing to an exile, though perhaps not more wonderful than those Fluellen found between Monmouth and Macedon.

So much the Bridge, laid across the bosom of the River-mother like the long lute, grown gruffer, of Sarasvati,* says to the ear. For the eye it has long lost the shape of incongruity ; and seen from far off hills, writ fair and fine across the landscape, looks for all the world like a Sanskrit signature upon a sacred picture.

III

The Town Bund, though raised by the same sinister agency as the Bridge, is from its shape and purpose far more easily to be recognised as a part and appanage of the Indies. It is a

* Goddess of Learning. Her picture appears at the head of the Dedication.

great stone-faced mole or earthwork, built along the east bank of the river immediately below the Bridge, and designed to protect the town from inundation during the annual rains. The citizens indeed declare, that in the flood season the water in the town is invariably at the same level as the water in the river. Everybody admits, however, that the Bund is a magnificent promenade. It carries a broad road upon its back, and is measured with equidistant lamps, like a London bridge ; but its other attributes remind one rather of Benares.

Of the stairs, by which the whole face of the escarpment is crossed and scaled, the largest is the noble flight, fifty yards in breadth, which the citizens perversely, as it seems to the sentimental traveller, seek and fail to dignify with the title of the Steamer Ghaut ; although the quaint pair of mid-Victorian paddleboats, in which our town rejoices, never, I believe, discolour the purity of its Vedic atmosphere. Brand-new in name and matter, the Steamer Ghaut is haunted by the spirit of the past. It is the last word of that more than ancient, more than foreign civilisation, to which we Anglo-Indians live so near, of which we know so little. Here rests the palankeen, or rusty curricule, of many an inland family, come from far to bathe in the sacred river. Here, among the pitcher-dipping damsels of the town, comes the pilgrim widow from Benares with her dainty vessel of Ganges water, thinking to win merit by mingling the substance of the sister streams. Necessary mediator in all such transactions, the Brahmin, with hard, calculating brows, squats at the water's edge, and seems to focus upon his petty gains powers that might serve to administer a province. But

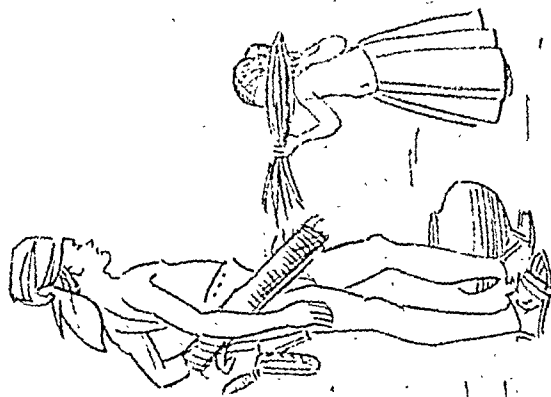
his lay neighbour, a clerk or lawyer perhaps in the world, but now, breast-high in the river, solemnising his own daily baptism, is a pleasanter picture of devotion. Here are brass vessels of Memphian design, brown skins of every stain ; wet draperies, red and white like the water lilies ; no coat to be seen, that livery of the westernised ; and my own scholars in unfamiliar guise, half-naked, half-ashamed and strange, like friends met in a dream.

The westward outlook of the Bund, the outlook over the river, which is after all its chief glory, must for the present remain veiled and blind, for the aspects of the great river cannot be presented in a single picture ; they are as many and various as Time's, form in fact a notable feature of that pageant of the seasons, of which we are to treat later. Eastward we take the town as it might be unawares from behind, and look down upon crowded yards, high-walled, and crooked, narrow streets ; houses reticent, irregular, patriarchal in plan, Moorish and Georgian sometimes in outward feature ; on temple towers, and plantain-leaves, and cocoanut palms.

The temples are in the southern mode, but mean in style and ornament beside the temples of the south. Mouldings and carved columns of far nobler design, the fragments of an older beauty, may be found built into the Muhammadan Mosque in the bazaar, may be fished out of the river, or traced in remote country shrines, some of which we may visit later. The largest temple of Rajahmundry is dedicated to Markandeswara, a name of Siva. My Hindu neighbours do not consider me sufficiently sympathetic, or virtuous, or cleanly (or some-



ON THE RIVER STAIRS: WAITING FOR
MOTHER.



THE FIRST SIP.

The toddy-drawer's little daughter is tasting the fresh
juice of the palmyra from a ladle of palmyra-leaf.

his lay neighbour, a clerk or lawyer perhaps in the world, but now, breast-high in the river, solemnising his own daily baptism, is a pleasanter picture of devotion. Here are brass vessels of Memphian design, brown skins of every stain; wet draperies, red and white like the water lilies; no coat to be seen, that livery of the westernised; and my own scholars in unfamiliar guise, half-naked, half-ashamed and strange, like friends met in a dream.

The westward outlook of the Bund, the outlook over the river, which is after all its chief glory, must for the present remain veiled and blind, for the aspects of the great river cannot be presented in a single picture; they are as many and various as Time's, form in fact a notable feature of that pageant of the seasons, of which we are to treat later. Eastward we take the town as it might be unawares from behind, and look down upon crowded yards, high-walled, and crooked, narrow streets; houses reticent, irregular, patriarchal in plan, Moorish and Georgian sometimes in outward feature; on temple towers, and plantain-leaves, and cocoanut palms.

The temples are in the southern mode, but mean in style and ornament beside the temples of the south. Mouldings and carved columns of far nobler design, the fragments of an older beauty, may be found built into the Muhammadan Mosque in the bazaar, may be fished out of the river, or traced in remote country shrines, some of which we may visit later. The largest temple of Rajahmundry is dedicated to Markandeswara, a name of Siva. My Hindu neighbours do not consider me sufficiently sympathetic, or virtuous, or cleanly (or some-

thing between ; an ineradicable racial quality, of course, not personal) to be allowed to enter it ; and it was only recently that I discovered a gap in the back wall, ill-patched with palmyra leaves, whence one could look into the court, and examine almost at close quarters the bull Nandi, who sits in stone under a stone canopy before the shrine. The delicacy of the bull-god's collar and bells pleased me well enough ; otherwise there was nothing in the precinct (which was being prosaically whitewashed) to detain a virtuoso, though doubtless enough to raise transports in a saint. Markandeswara stands close to the Bund, and the road past the entrance leads to the bazaar, which runs parallel to the Bund at a distance of two furlongs. Let us try whether any particle of that glamour, which in the temple we have lost outright, may haply be found in the bazaar.

IV

It is generally considered the worst bazaar in Asia, because it is narrow, though lying on the main road, and very difficult to penetrate, by reason of the press. I remember being merrily chaffed at an Anglo-Indian dinner-table during my first year out, for ingenuously expressing a kindness for this bazaar ; and indeed if you enter it with the object of getting out again as quickly as possible, you are unlikely to notice its amiable qualities. It is crowded like a fair in business hours, a motley crowd imbued with all that lazy persuasion of its own impenetrability, which multitude induces. The consistency of this crowd is further stiffened by slow-moving ox-carts, locked if

necessary wheel to wheel ; its confusion worse confounded with impeding goats, its average of stupidity reinforced with cows, which if the throng should part for a moment, generally move into the breach. The mainstay of this motley phalanx is the Town Bull, the autocrat of the bazaar, huge as a hill, and almost as averse to locomotion ; who would seem meanwhile to be only restrained from devouring all the fruit and grain upon the stalls, by the limitation of his appetite, and an occasional cupful of water flung in his face. Of the human composition of this crowd there is no need to speak particularly, for all the world, of which this volume tells, walks in the bazaar. The shops resemble hutches, and are largely made of wood. The merchants have solid mansions elsewhere, but few of the houses which abut on the bazaar boast an upper storey. The wares, the sellers and the crowd, constitute the bazaar ; when at night the stalls are stripped or closed, and the crowd gone, the bazaar virtually disappears.

I have compared the bazaar to an alley of the Arabian Nights. It may, in fact, be identified as the particular alley down which the magician went, crying ' New lamps for old ! ' The incongruity of the trim English lamps at once jars an evening visitor. I believe there are now only four old lamps in use there, mostly by grain-sellers. One of them might have been guessed Aladdin's from the caution of the owner when I asked if he would sell it ; all have a certain mild magic, and power of calling up the past. They are heavy brass pieces, handsomely turned, and hung by a brazen chain. The three or four candle-flames, that sit upon the beaks of the rims, give less light,

perhaps, than English lamps, and therefore, of course, will in time be superseded; but it is hardly an illustration of the poet's conviction, that 'first in beauty must be first in place.'

But the magician from over the sea has supplied other commodities than lamps. There are the sewing-machines, that black familiar of the tailors; a thing so often seen in Asia, that it seems rather to speak, or sing, of the modern East, than West. The lamps and sewing-machines obtrude themselves; but a near inspection of the stalls will reveal the surprising fact that almost all the wares of the bazaar, which are of a nature to stand a voyage, are the produce of the West, or latterly of westernised Japan.

We will not linger over these gewgaws. They are the vilest conceivable, but painted brightly to attract 'the untutored mind.' This is the grievance of India, that nothing is done to protect her against this plague of frippery, or help her to supply the breach in her own production, into which it is being poured. Such topics are not our theme at present, but rather to tell of the fruit-sellers' quarter, where still the tropic reigns unchallenged; where oranges shine like a fire, and sugar-plantains from the Delta, the choicest kind in India, hang clustering like Cybebe's breasts. Hardby sit the grain-sellers behind huge balances of iron, and next the confectioners fingering little brazen scales, and vending a variety of tawny cakes, more palatable than a stranger might suppose. Here at least is to be obtained unspoiled that commodity of ancient memories in which India still is rich among the nations; unprofitable

stock, perhaps, no aim or end of policy, but pleasant while it lasts, and worth a place in the catalogue.

We have succeeded in navigating the bazaar ; but the Dowlaishwaram Anicut, though it almost abuts upon the far end of the highroad upon which we stand—and which now expands pleasantly, as if to draw a deep breath of fresh air after the suffocation of the bazaar, and walks through suburbs, shaded and fanned with branches of the stately banyan—that Anicut, I was about to say, is still four miles away.

I begin to wonder whether I did well to promise a description of the Anicut in this chapter of stabilities, being itself a conception as elusive and variable as the river it fetters. In the dry season it is a low causeway, tressed here and there with weeds 'not oozy,' and leading to the islands and the headlocks of the other shore ; in the rains a line of turbid foam, and a voice like the sea, save when the river is 'too full for speech,' when it is just an oily dimple on the path of the racing waters. There are castellated headworks at this end, a place exposed, where you may sit and watch the mottled kingfishers, and think about eternity. There is a deep lock, trim as a model, that lets you down to the East Canal.

Dowlaishwaram village is a little higher up the river, grouped about a rocky promontory ; the first stepping stone, as it were, of the series made by the islands. There is a temple on the hill, and under it a great hammering of boat-builders.

miles. Like riders on a motor-cycle, we have made the journey in a flash, without looking to the right or left. Nearly a mile from the bazaar, sublimely blind, we passed on the right hand side of the road (have I said enough to imply the side toward the river ?) a building not to be reckoned among picturesque monuments, which yet, apart from its latent interest, ought not to be left without remark, if certain of my references are to be understood.

It is called the Government Arts College. It consists of a groundling sprawl of classrooms, modern indeed, but English-tropical, verandah-shaded. Through the wide windows appear wooden galleries, where bowed forms sit, tier above tier, like trireme-rowers ready to race ; but they maintain, longer than the figure requires, this attitude of tense preparation for the course of life. Let us descend from our simile, and go closer. These are youths between sixteen and twenty, the flower of the Godavery-and-Krishna country, and they are studying (if some figure from horticulture be not more appropriate) for the B.A. degree of the Madras University. Their teachers are mostly of their own race ; but the lectures they are delivering, which jangle pleasantly together at a little distance, are in the English tongue, save two that cry in the top of all the rest, the old-world litanies of the Pundits in Sanskrit and Telugu.

The subjects taught, the theories discussed, the phrases used in this institution belie and early obliterate the sense of strangeness created by the appearance of the classes ; the dark faces, the leavening of curious tonsures and painted caste-

marks, the soft white raiment, the naked, beautiful feet, that carry the beholder back to ancient Athens ; too early obliterate perhaps, for the visual image is here the index of the deeper truth. Let me tell you now, as one who has known this place nine years, what does not meet the stranger's eye.

These boys, mostly Brahmins, these students of Spencer and Mill, of Shakespeare and Browning, come largely from remote villages and towns, where old theocracy still rules. Many of them are married, and some (for the initial marriage is no more than a sort of binding betrothal) have children. Their English notions sit upon them sometimes with a strange detachment ; you meet many a clever science student who believes in astrology ; many a keen footballer who considers defeat dishonourable. Their real convictions, when one seems to reach them, strike one often as curiously cynical, or extravagantly sentimental ; incoherencies perhaps inevitable in the first attempt to reconcile the ends of the earth, and extremities of time.

Deeply as their tradition teaches them to honour learning, they shew too little reverence for the system which we offer, and which necessity compels them to accept. With an inborn reverence for the things of the spirit, they yet seem for the most part to approach Western education, and the system of examinations by which its approaches are defended, with a lack of idealism, an indifference to culture, a concentration upon the material end, a preference for every kind of indirect and unprofitable means, as is not found even in the ' materialistic ' West. Such at least is the lament of an idealist entangled in

the detail of a system which he cannot alter as he would !

Not that the system has failed definitely to qualify the Indian outlook in various ways. In literary taste, in matters concerning the social and moral conscience, its influence has been considerable and mainly wholesome ; and for all their indifference to modern culture, an educated Indian audience will make more of a scene of Shakespeare than the same number of Anglo-Indians.

Other effects of this unripe renaissance, not to be contemplated by Englishmen with the same satisfaction, must yet be chronicled. Certain political doctrines, not taught indeed in the schools, yet emanating from that Western contact which the schools have established, our young scholars hold, or think they hold, as one man ; that British fiscal policy, by refusing protection, exploits India in the interests of England ; that India is miserably poor in consequence ; that England is afraid of the intellectual and industrial development of India ; that she is indifferent, beyond other European nations, to the past greatness, and present possibilities, of Indian civilisation ; that Indians, because of their lower political status, are treated by too many Englishmen with too little ceremony ; and, for conclusion and climax, held more or less absolutely, that Indians are likely to govern the country better, because more in India's interest, and more cheaply, than Englishmen.

Their view is partial, extreme, not always consistent with itself, often held as a mere protest and consolation against an existing order, otherwise accepted with resignation. But I am convinced that its various counts contain more elements of

truth, and better deserve the examination of thoughtful and conscientious Englishmen, than the latter are generally willing to believe.*

Thus within a few acres of classroom and playground are to be found in abridgement all the problems and paradoxes that bristle about that huge experiment, the British Empire in India. The statist and the merchant are apt to lay the blame for the present perplexities at the door of the school-master, in which position let them beware, lest they impugn at the same time their own and country's enterprise ; since to despair of English education in India, seems like despairing of British rule. It behoves us rather to face the situation bodily, to believe that the problems can be solved, the paradoxes reconciled. The meeting and atonement of East and West need not be deferred, as Kipling supposes, until the Day of Judgment, unless the latter is to be regarded as in some sense eternally present ; for assuredly understanding can only be achieved on the common ground and before the central court of truth and justice, not in the devious ways of greed and cant, or pride and prejudice.

* I have left this paragraph as it was written just before the passing of the Montague reforms.



THE BLUE BIRD.

CHAPTER III**THE RAINY SEASON IN TELINGANA****I**

As the four English seasons lend themselves to the broader sub-division of summer and winter—the time of the frost and the time of the flowers, so the several Indian seasons, however we may further sub-divide them (and the Indians distinguish eight minor seasons), admit and indeed invite a larger classification into the rainy and dry, the season of the cloud, and the season of the sunshine. Of all seasons therefore, that of the rains, considered as one, is the most strongly individualised and separately coloured. In its occurrence and withdrawal alike it gives character to the revolution of the tropic year, and a pleasing difference not found in the more stable climate of the islands, from reports of which our English notions of the tropics are commonly derived. This variety supplies the mind's treasury with partitions for the disposal of its imaginary records, and furnishes the theatre of the memory with pleasant changes of scenery.

In present proof the rainy is not the most comfortable season. Its liquid relief is exaggerated, it discovers leaks in

the roof, and turns ways and fields into bogs and pools. It drives the mind inward upon itself, to compare great things with small, like the proverbial 'rainy day' in England. Yet there is something pleasant to remember in those grey noons and misty twilights. Perhaps the spirit likes to have her time of gloom, as the rose her winter. Indian art and poetry love the rains. Rabindranath Tagore seems to refer to the 'rainy July' with a special kindness.

In the dry season of India the earth is brown, the sky blue, and the waning water blue ; but in the rains the earth is green, the sky grey, and the water brown. There is a superfluity of this brown water ; but the season is chiefly remarkable for the nurture of green things. The margin of the ways, bare in May, is obscured with feathery grass and a lush foliage of weeds. The turf in open places is thick and strong, like English turf, and here and there on the hem of the jungle may be found, discovery rare in Asia, the similitude of an English meadow. Delicate creepers bind the wayside cactus-blades, and ripple up the stems of trees ; parasites of so fine an essence, that the first glance of the sun will shrivel and drink it up. Yet some of them are lusty and bold enough in their season, and expatiate and prevail. There is a region between the great marsh and the sandstone hills, the palms and foliage of whose fields and mango-gardens are so looped and mantled with trailing plants as to suggest Ceylon, or the Amazon, and emulate along a narrow mile of actuality the idea of the tropics, which runs riot in the minds of people who stay at home.

So much for the wild work and holiday of nature. Let us now speak of her collaboration with man.

The ooze of the 'wet lands'* is ploughed up early with moiling buffaloes, and the paddy-shoots transplanted from their nurseries, and set in the open fields, as it were with a music of women's voices; for in India field and croft are 'places where they sing,' and quires of women, even in peace time, do the lighter portion of the field work, planting, weeding, reaping. By middle August the blades have grown up so thickly as to hide the sky-reflecting water about the roots, and present an apparently level surface of the most vivid green. In rich rice-country this illusory and soft carpeting extends for miles, like a green sea, lit with the white wings of paddy-birds. In delta tracts and elsewhere, when the supply of tank water outlasts the summer crop, the rice-farmer's year has a double revolution, and March fields repeat blade for blade the green lesson of September.

In the dry lands, where the slower maize is the staple crop, the three rainy months, July, August, and September, are pre-eminently the months of ploughing and sowing. Then the famous 'black cotton soil' of the open field, lately turned, takes a colour as deep and rich as the velvet in a Holbein portrait. Our husbandmen plough with oxen, after the ancient fashion, yoking a pair to a plough.

An account of the plough itself should have some place in our prose Indian Georgic. The thing is made entirely of wood,

* See Chap. II., §1.

save where the solid share, hewn roughly to the shape of a small boat's beak, is shod with a little iron. Upon this share are fitted at different angles the handle and the pole, whose other end is lashed to the yoke. The result exactly resembles the ploughs painted upon Greek black-figure vases. This empirical and rude instrument is said to tickle the light soil, and cajole the easy climate of India to better purpose than our more ponderous and complex ploughs would do. In any case one sees no other kind in use. The share is borne afield by the oxen bound upon the yoke, the reversed pole trailing upon the ground. When work is over, ploughs are often left in the furrow, where they stand all night with poles aslant upon the tilted yokes, like a kind of wooden anchor of the land.

Ploughers commonly work in single column of five or six and upwards, and their march and counter-march in a July field on a cloudy day is a stirring spectacle. Sometimes the sower strides behind, like an illustration of the parable, splashing the grain from his right hand against the curved contour of the basket which he carries in his left. A wake of crows and egrets, black wings and white, brings up the moving rear. The only object present which might seem to locate the scene in any of the last two and a half thousand years, is an occasional film of smoke from a ploughman's cheroot, and perhaps in a corner of the field—strange symbol of modernity—the twisted rope or plait of straw within which smoulders the necessary fire. A halt is called about eight o'clock, or as time is measured here, when the sun reaches the height of a palmyra-top; and the ploughers repair to the shade, if the

blaze be strong, and eat their breakfast, brought by women and boys.

But for the scholar what a rich refreshment, what a realisation for anyone with a sense of history, accrues from the mere fact of a morning spent among the ploughs ! What a load of uncongenial centuries will be lifted from between the spirit's wings, what a litter of tedious novelties and civic rubbish blown from the brain over the face of the fresh earth before us as we gaze, cheek by jowl, with Hesiod and Virgil, at the great resting beasts, monuments of moulded muscle and wrinkled hide, mildly animated and familiarised, but not degraded by an innumerable wrangle of common flies ! We appraise points and apprehend prices, with a delightful matter-of-factness, which merely serves to bring the poetry of the situation home. For these folk and cattle, despite their flavour of the Decalogue, are all familiar figures.

These are Bobu Seshayya's oxen, the old man who lives with his sons, their wives and children, in yonder patriarchal cluster of huts and cattle sheds, fast growing into a village. We do well to wait this morning, if we wish to see the work at all, for Bobu's team comprises eleven yokes, the tallest and strongest oxen of the neighbourhood ; they will plough the whole of this great field to-day, and be gone to-morrow, whether to furrow his own lands or ply for hire elsewhere. The big man, with the locks and ear-rings, who leaves the leading couple and speaks to us of one of the team which has gone sick, is Bobu's eldest son. The third in the line is young Bhulokam, lately promoted ploughman, whom I knew first eight years ago, as little neat-

herd, the skilful player upon the pipe in lonely places, but since also as a zealous choryphaeus of the youths' dancing-choir.

Accident in India sometimes lends deceptive encouragement to classic memories. When this boy first told me his name, I was led somehow delightfully to fancy a corrupt connection with the Greek words *βοις* and *λαχειν*, as if the name meant one 'who had a lot or part in oxen.' It really denotes 'the earth-region,' which is almost as happy.* As for old Bobu himself, who could resist the temptation to link his name with those resourceful formations that signify 'to or for, by, with, or from oxen'?

Between the *bund*, or high earthwork which the engineers have built in order to curb the vagaries of the river,† and the usual margin, there lies at the point where I live a tract of level turf nearly half a mile in breadth, which incidentally affords the finest ground for horse-exercise in the neighbourhood. This region is largely leased out for grazing; the brawniest buffaloes and stateliest white oxen, lacqued by mincing cattle-egrets, are always to be seen there; but wide and annually varying portions of it are also devoted to the cultivation of maize and tobacco; and the more acres are thus ploughed up, the less room there is for riding.

Many a July and August morning, therefore, have I stood upon the *bund*, in the spirit of a helpless Norman William, and watched the distant ploughs go up and down, little solid

* A friend suggests *βωλαξ*.

† It is carried on both sides of the river, from the Delta to the foothills of the Eastern Ghats, a distance of twenty miles.

clumps of men and oxen, like hands writing out the text of some liminary charter ; while a motion of white sails made the river beyond seem not less busy and populous than the land.

I shall now say something of the river, since the account has brought us to the brink.

II

Three times as a rule during the rainy season the river rises out of her proper bed and reaches out over the intervening space to touch the inner slope of the containing earthwork. Perhaps the most memorable sight of the rainy season is that obtainable at evening from the town *bund*, when the river is in fresh flood, and all the town is out to see it. The wide sandy marges, shoals and islands, which in the dry season make the bed of the river look like the map of a new hemisphere, are now no longer to be seen. The long half-league between earthwork and earthwork is a vast expanse of curled 'red water,' travelling at headlong speed, and carrying on its broad back the miscellaneous plunder of the inland plains and forests.

Far out upon the moving waste thatched roofs are hurried, and heads of swimming cattle appear, and brakes, and logs, and branches, and perfect forest-trees. The wild procession excites only the wonder of the comfortable citizen ; but to the poor it is an occasion of adventure and profit. Women and girls filch small flotsam from the shore with long bamboo crooks, while the boys and young men, aye, and some lean elders

also, strip themselves and put forth boldly into the stream on floats, and thus take what toll they can of the flood's plunder.

These floats, called by Europeans 'Godavery horses,' are one of the features of the river. They were originally made of wood, like the British Navy; but during the last decade a hollow sort of tin has been introduced, which bids fair, like the *Dreadnought*, to oust all previous types. The float is shaped like a little boat, or perhaps a Godavery plantain, whereupon the occupant, rider, swimmer, what you will, lies prone, and propels the thing with arms and legs at a kind of trudgeon stroke. The new sort show a more elaborate curve than the old, in order to keep the stopper, which is at the point of the prow, clear of the water. They are also commonly painted with monstrous eyes, and the conventional tiger-stripes of the Coromandel painter, which resemble rather flickering tongues of flame.

Prostrate upon such floats, the naked youths appear like Tritons upon the face of the water, or else sit nursing their vehicles on the shore, ready to launch forth in mutual rivalry, like hounds of the river, as soon as a timber quarry of enough tines is hurled into the offing. The wood thus recovered is collected and auctioned by the municipal officers, but a certain moiety goes to the salver. Dead logs are not the only objects salvaged by the float-fleet. Poisonous snakes, washed from the jungles, are sometimes unwittingly rescued, and I have seen a buffalo held up and brought ashore, weak and wondering as a new-born lamb, but otherwise not apparently the worse for his long watery pilgrimage.

When the river is in full flood, she takes the Dowlaishwaram Anicut as it were in her stride, with hardly so much as a dimple of the surface. At other times she plunges heavily from the barrier, and the convolutions of the solid floodwater, the wreaths and waves and floriated scrolls, are like some beautiful and fearful dream of demonic art, some inter-sensual mode between wood-carving and organ-music, whose modulations are half in space and half in time, and which deafens the ear while it entrances and overawes the sight. At such times the driftwood, which has eluded the floatmen of the town, is often entangled and trampled in the fall for a considerable time. The great beams labour and pitch-poll, and plunge and lunge, and butt and belabour the underface of the barrier, in utter defiance, apparently, of the laws of nature and the rush of waters, till you might suppose that the Anicut were being attacked from below by a storming-party of submerged Titans.

Meanwhile the floatmen of Dowlaishwaram gather in the calm water on the flanks of the Anicut, sitting their log steeds gracefully, like the naked riders of the Parthenon frieze. They know that a knotty tree-trunk will presently be wrested from the grasp of one of those agonising Titans, and hurried seaward. Down go their chins at once to the wood, and up go their heels, and away go the floats in a flock after the dwindling prize! But not even emulation will induce them to approach the front of the cataract, lest they be caught and tortured like the senseless logs. The work is rough enough as it is, and one sees hereabouts, as I remarked with the satisfaction of your true

reactionary, floats of honest timber only, none of your new-fangled, flimsy, painted tin.

One cannot guess the secrets of the flood from superficial appearance. The water immediately below the bridge appears almost as fearfully embossed as the water under the Anicut ; yet the gay floats of the town, which dare not show their perky noses hereabouts, navigate the worst eddies of the bridge with impunity.

III

By September the reservoirs or ' tanks ' with which the countryside is inlaid are generally brim-full, and many a hollow, pit, and lane does duty for the time being as a pool or stream. The frogs in these rainy-season ponds at night set up a babble and clamour inconceivable to anyone who has not heard it. Sometimes the din of a near puddle eerily resembles the bleating of a vast sheepfold, in which the voices far and near of lambs, and ewes, and patriarchal rams emerge ; but sometimes the bell of the bullfrog seems too deep and loud for any lung but an ox's. Sometimes again one is almost led to fancy that this dank symphony is the work of goblin instruments, of plucked string, kettle-drum, tambourine and gong, and reeds blown bubbling in the water. . . . I knew a man who could imitate and interpret with absurd felicity this hubbub of a monsoon pond. ' Tek-a-nek, tek-a-nek, *kill-a-duck*,' he would intone, recalling that refrain of the Stygian frogs in Aristophanes, *Βρεκεκεκεξ κουε* and then with measured emphasis, the spondaic boom of the

old males '*more grog.*' X could imitate with equal happiness the desultory plain-song voices of an Indian railway station, and the 'yoicks! tally-ho!' of a cry of jackals. He is now on the retired list, and I doubt whether his chiselled renderings, however curious they may appear in England, will ever be understood and loved as they were in many an up-country Indian club. I think of him with sympathy, for such is the fate of art in exile.

It was not, however, for the sake of the frogs that I introduced the subject of September pools, for the frogs are as loud, or louder in July. But in September the water-lilies first begin to appear in splendid companies. One sort of Indian water-lily is white, and like our own, but larger. It is almost always associated with another of the same shape and size, but of a peerless crimson colour, which partly imbues even the stalk and leaves. These lilies never grow in rivers, Indian poets notwithstanding, who even plant the lotus in the sea! But they appear in great profusion upon all tanks and pools, where they present as fair a prospect of flowers as may be seen anywhere.

My house is built upon the bank of a long-disused canal, by which at one time sugar-cane was brought in boats to a neighbouring factory, now dismantled. I sometimes think I still see the angle of a ghostly sail over my garden-wall. The communication of this channel with the river has been long obstructed, but the rain keeps it full for half the year, and in the time of lilies it presents a splendid spectacle. As the water

sinks, the lilies become fewer and smaller, and by January fine blooms are no longer forthcoming for the daily delectation of my luxurious Lar. But I know the boon will be renewed next year, if the season be favourable, or the swine do not eat up all the roots during the hot weather.

This pool produces also a few blue lilies of a smaller size, and shaped very much as the lotus is painted in Egyptian frescoes. Neither the red, nor the white, nor the blue lily, however, is the famous lotus or *padma*, the darling of the Indian arts. This is a larger water-flower, less common, but also to be found in these parts, having broad, loose, overlapping petals, and a pale pink flush instead of the deep crimson of the lily. I have seen also a white variety in Deccan. The old Indian poets represent the lotus as the lover of the sun, the lily of the moon, because the former opens in the day-time, and the latter at night.

A certain curious Englishman, instigated and abetted by a young Hindu poet* who had imbibed Tennysonian standards of poetic veracity, set out with a lantern one September evening at seven o'clock, in order to discover whether the habits of the lilies in the above-mentioned canal indicated any knowledge of or respect for the old poetic formula. He does not remember what they saw, but he has since observed that the lilies, which the sun finds at his rising in full display, are generally shut and almost invisible at noon. Evidently the ancient poets occasionally looked at nature, unlike the mole-eyed pandits of the present age.

* K. V. R., whom I have called Nagabushanam in Chap. VIII.

On one day in September the surface of the old canal, and indeed of all the tanks and pools of the countryside, is plundered of all its white and crimson pride, which is carried into the streets and sold for use in honour of the elephant-faced Vinayakar, or Ganapati, whose festival, and green annual jubilee, takes place about this time. Why this popular deity, the Blessor of Beginnings and Remover of Obstacles, should be associated with the greenness of the mid-monsoon, is a question which I should like some mythologist, or historian, to answer for me. On this day potters in the bazaar stamp clay effigies of the god from wooden blocks, and decorate them with tinsel, and every householder buys one, and a wicker-frame whereof to make a shrine for it, and flowers to honour it withal, and takes them home, and worships, and on the twelfth day throws them in the sacred river.

IV

It would be tedious to chronicle all the transactions of the vegetable kingdom during the rains, but I must not omit to mention powdery teak-blossom, and the scarlet summer flowering of the tree called forest-flame, perhaps the loudest and proudest note of colour in the pageant of the Indian year. My mind gratefully remembers also the silver pampas plumes that wave along Godavery bank for miles in late September. The appearance of this mass of grass-plumes from the height of the river-bund was compared by A.B, a young Indian poet of my acquaintance, to a bed of clouds seen from above by a

watcher on a mountain-top at dawn. I doubt whether he had ever himself seen the sight which makes the second term of his comparison, but I who have, was astonished at the happiness of the image.

Northern and central India depend for rain mostly on the vast humid current known as the south-west monsoon, which prevails between the middle of June and the end of September. (When I was in England, I used to imagine the monsoon to be some kind of sudden tropical phenomenon, a cousin of the typhoon, and the simoon ; it is really only a long and heavy spell of rainy weather, occasionally violent.) In the Tamil country south of Madras, the south-west monsoon is ineffective, and most of the rain which falls there is due to a weaker backwash, known as the north-east monsoon, which lasts from October to December. The northern Cirkars, with which we are now concerned, is affected chiefly by the earlier deluge, and our year's rainfall is sometimes nearly over by October. In other years the influence of the recoil is felt as well, and rain continues to fall till the end of November, but with less force and frequency than before.

The rainfall of our district is not much heavier than that of an English midland county, but it comes all at once ; not the most artistic arrangement, but convenient in its own way. The rain is very lusty while it lasts. As a boy I could never understand the meaning of the proverb ' It never rains but it pours.' In India it is literally true. Yet there are lucid intervals of sunshine to cheer this melancholy of the year, and more welcome yet, cool days roofed with rainless cloud. It ends with

scattered storms and showers, as wayward, but not so gentle, as an *English* April ; majestic rather in their approach across the river, veiling one by one the islands and the sunlit sails ; electrical also in their effect upon wayside washer-folk, who spring to catch their outspread cloths together as soon as the further shore becomes invisible, and race laden for shelter through the first drops, mixed with less wary wayfarers, and unsagacious goats and cows. These dreadless and merry alarms of the rain are always worth the watching.

I saw a pleasing variation of the same theme as I came lately through the bazaar at nightfall. A procession passed with drums and horns and a number of those huge white portable gas-lights, which the modern Hindus, so fond of artificial glitter, have made peculiarly theirs. The object of honour, a village goddess, was represented by a spread of superimposed flounces like a big pen-wiper, based upon the coils and canopied by the hood of a brazen serpent. She rode poised upon the head of a dancing devotee, and a company followed with songs and fruit and flowers, and other offerings in brazen bowls and pans. Suddenly out of the twilight a heavy shower of rain emptied itself upon the bazaar ; whereupon the whole of that odd procession vanished as if by magic ; the music ceased, the lights went out, the crowd was not.

Being presently driven, by the leakage of the shed under which I had originally taken refuge, and from which I witnessed the miracle, hurriedly to seek a more substantial shelter, I suddenly found myself stooping between the many-kirtled goddess and one of the portable gas-lights ; while a drummer

of the rite, crouching near me, was soliciting the favour of a light for his cheroot.

v

The annual abdication of the Rain-god is attended by a splendid ceremonial in the upper region of the firmament. The poet Kalidas often speaks of the whiteness of an 'autumn cloud.' He lived in the fifth century, and could hardly be expected, perhaps, to describe in greater detail the wonders of its shape and texture. The vast cloud-continent of the heavy rains are generally formless, dissolute, suggesting a Shakespearian hyperbole of vapour, ugly wrack, and rotten smoke. Very pleasant is the first sight of the firmer skies; just a silver morning lapel of cloud-needlework, perhaps, or fishy scale, or celestial swan's-down; and later, masses like sculptured marble delicately lit and shaded, and girt with wisps and haloes of luminous mist. Noon is the time to see at its lordliest this ritual of the sun's apocalypse; often at that hour have I watched pass the shining spoils, and gloomy reluctant followers of his triumphal car.

Nor are the glories less remarkable of the late sunlight and the afterglow. The typical cloud of a September afternoon rises in the blue east like a pillar of the Exodus; firm as chiselled marble above, ravelled in the waist, heavily founded under in a shapeless heap, half-drowned in the red haze of the horizon. Or you shall see one roofed like a cedar dark against the sunset, edged about with crimson fire, and full of silver lightning. You shall see the like frequent lightning flicker in a moist

crevice of another in the north-west, the white nerve of it blurred and misty as if seen through water. . . . After sunset the grey pile opposite will suddenly be topped with rose, while across the dark blue zenith from east to west are drawn three strands of rosy mist, through which shine the evening star and the new moon. Later expect a wonderful brilliance of stars, and lightnings signalling from horizon to horizon.

A.B, already mentioned as one to whom Sarasvati, the single Indian Muse, has granted the gift of simile, once compared one of those tall September clouds (whose general form is curiously recurrent) to the Naga or hooded cobra coiled and ready to strike. This apt and beautiful comparison loses by report abroad, where neither of its terms are familiar to the eye, and where the solemn native associations of the Naga in religion and art have to be taken on trust. I mention it for the sake of its local colour and such fragrance as may survive.

.

At the beginning of October S. Michael and all the angels conspire with the goddess Kali to devise for 'too superstitious' and polytheistic modern India a brief holiday, which enables one to make excursion to the sea, or a pilgrimage to a temple. In order to afford the reader also some relief, and change 'pure description,' perhaps it would not be considered inappropriate if I proceed now briefly to relate the experiences of such an expedition, and afterwards return refreshed to the task of carrying our rural calendar forward another stage.

For already the turf grows paler under the open sky, and

at night (unless my fancy anticipates) there is a new coolness in the air, harbingers of change. When we return in mid-October the familiar sights and signs of the rainy season will perhaps be memories only ; we shall have to wait the remainder of a year before we smell the wet ploughed earth again, and see the corrugated palm-leaf umbrellas shouldered by neat-herd boys in green landscape, or stuck like toadstools upon great cartloads of timber passed upon the miry roads.

CHAPTER IV

SIMHĀCHALAM

IN Vizagapatam, the district next to ours (Godavery) towards the north, the ragged outworks of the Eastern Ghauts straggle across the coastal plain and make promontories in the sea. The temple of Simhāchalam, situated eight miles inland from the port of Vizagapatam, is set far up in a fertile cleft of one of these litoral ranges, a glen celebrated for its pine-apples, and perennial rill. The temple is not large, nor world-famous for its architecture, like the temples of the Tamil country. But it is a name of old renown in these parts, a place of common pilgrimage; and its romantic situation adds another charm.

I first climbed the glen in February many years ago, and no doubt in the dry spring-season the ceaseless and pervading splash and glitter and fragrance of its falling water is precious, wonderful and grateful, more than at other times. But the memories of that early pilgrimage have long since lost their curious detail, and I shall therefore describe a visit paid in a more recent October, in company with a young Hindu friend.

The district of Vizagapatam, with its change of hill and

plain, and shore and sea, its vigour and variety of vegetation, which lends elegance even to the inevitable palmyra ; its green fruit-gardens and ruddy earth, its rock-strewn watercourses and goat-browsed grassy slopes, and visionary crags, is exceedingly beautiful ; and were I to do it justice, my picture would perhaps leave the reader, as I was often left for a time by the reality, out of humour with the homelier landscape of Godavery. Is there anything in nature so nearly infinite, anything so pure, so radiant, so glorious in colour as the sea ; the tropic sea, first seen from a height, and after a long spell in the jaded midland ? We shall return to the sea later. For the present we must start inland for Simhāchalam.

We rode on bicycles, Ramudu and I, rejoicing in the morning beauty of the landscape, lifting our eyes in wonder (and at some risk) to the rocky brows of the great hills, and all the grandeur and loveliness of which I spoke in the last paragraph. Arrived at the village, we bestowed our cycles, then sat under the eaves of a palm-thatched stall, and drank delicious juice out of young cocoanuts ; rough goblets, nature's amphoræ rather, brought in green and broached with knives before us. We bought plantains, found the bottom of the stone stair (which was said to number more than nine hundred steps), and began to climb under a roof of boughs.

Presently the way was barred by a huge wall, solid and blind as a city rampart, from the face of which the sacred spring leapt in a crystal half-arch into a cistern of masonry, whence it was again shot with the force of a fire-hose into a lower cistern, only to be carried off ignominiously toward the foot of

the hill in a modern pipe. The pipe was the gift of the late Maharajah of V——, once owner of the temple, and of a personality of which we shall get later another curious glimpse. In the great shadow of this rampart (for it stood athwart the morning sunlight) we turned and peered out of our leafy cleft at the sunny plain beneath, a tufted and wide pavement of terra-cotta sparsely tessalate with jade and emerald. I grew giddy at the sight ; I had taken no food that morning, and was fain to stay myself with plantains.

We drank also of the sacred spring, splintering the glassy bow with our hands. The stream had evidently broken bounds during the rains, for the stairs that led up to the barrier, and threaded the winding narrow alley-port that pierced it, were much displaced and worn, and a copious brook still trickled over the slippery stones. Here Ramudu, with his naked feet, had the advantage of me, but I won through with the help of a rusty chain fixed in the wall of the archway.

Over the port in the further face of the barrier was a pillared recess, or balcony, which somehow reminded me of the place where David wept for Absalom ; and shrines, and mossy cells, and cisterns for the stream to rest in, now stood thick about the stair, and crumbling platforms wreathed in the roots of ancient trees. It seemed as if we had entered the refuge of an earlier age. Holy beggars and unkempt ascetics, degenerate children of the prophets, beset our path in growing numbers. Some of them had brass trays containing little molten images, a smear of saffron, a smatter of rose-leaves and copper coins, perhaps a wisp of flame. All wore upon their foreheads immense red

and white castemarks ; and one, who said he had been to Kasi (Benares), hummed Sanskrit over a printed book.

Altogether the old world stair-street was full of life at this point. Troops of way-worn pilgrims toiled cheerfully upwards (we spoke to them, they came from distant villages), and sometimes a party of priests, their white clothes and ochre skins very dapper and clean, came down. We saw also several cows (who seemed to take their own sanctity very seriously) ascending and descending, like the angels upon Jacob's ladder.

Between the top of the stair and the temple we came upon the palm-thatch roofs of a fairly large village, the whole slanting street of which was paved with stone, as a protection, I suppose, against the violence of the rainwater as it pours off the hill. This village is probably the home of the temple servants, of provision sellers, and other stall-holders who live by the pilgrims. Stalls of fruit, cates, garlands and other kickshaws, lined the approach to the temple gate.

The temple itself was not very large. Those of the Tamil country alone of Indian temples are comparable in size with our own cathedrals and larger churches. This had an outer quadrangle, beyond which no Gentile is allowed to go, and an inner cloister immediately round the shrine. The central tower was nondescript and plain in style, but vaguely resembled the Tamil type, which I shall describe in a later chapter. There was a fine frieze of elephants and swans, in the best Dravidian conventional manner, carved low upon the outer wall of the cloister. The decorative Dravidian swan or *hamsa*, resembles rather a glorified Dodo than anything living ; and in fact many

of the beasts of classic Indian sculpture might pass for casuistical devices, invented to evade the Second Commandment ; for they represent neither the likeness of anything in the heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth. Yet one gets to love the very formalism of the great southern schools, whether for its own sake, or associations.

There was also to be seen in the outer court a fairly large 'mandap' or detached portico. It was supported upon a large number of polygonal columns, each one differently and elaborately carved in a local variant of what is known as the 'Chalukyan' order, and was evidently designed to serve the same purpose as the great 'thousand-pillared mandaps' of Conjeeveram or Madura, which are used at the celebration of the god's annual marriage. In size, in extravagance and curiosity of labour, it was far inferior to those, but yet beautiful and curious in its quieter way. Later generations (perhaps the progressive Rajah again) have temporarily spoiled this building by fencing it between the outer pillars with wooden bars, and using it as a store-house for the timbers and other properties employed to build tabernacles at festivals.

Ramudu, the modernist, who was interested rather in the natural wonders of the hill than its spiritual possibilities or architectural treasures, now proposed that we should find the head of the sacred spring. The rill was no longer with us, and its birthplace must have been already passed, but as Ramudu seemed to know of an earlier manifestation, and as the neighbourhood was pleasant and enticing, I humoured him. We accordingly left the precinct and followed the upward path,

which led between the last perched houses of the village toward the top of the hill. The steps grew rougher, soon disappeared entirely. The path swerved back behind the temple, and we looked down into the inner cloister, and saw the outer walls of the shrine fairly near, but not so that I could notice any interesting detail. From the cloister arose a sound of the quarrels and laughter of children.

Higher up, choice glimpses over the tree-tops appeared of the plains and neighbouring hills. Led on by the report of labourers in the tilted crofts and vegetable-gardens that fringed the path, nurseries doubtless of the famous pine-apple, we at last reached and crossed the crown of the hill, but could not find the spring, which the husbandmen continued to declare to be just a little further on. The Indians hate to return a disappointing answer; they prefer to postpone and aggravate disappointment. . . .

But in place of the spring we came upon a marvellous wide prospect, a very microcosm, wherein appeared, small as in a picture, brilliant and pale as in a vision, Waltair and the Vizag Estuary, and the promontory called the Dolphin's Nose, and the silver outline of the coast of half a district; and inland the sudden hills of the plain, like rocky islands, and the spine and withers of the range itself whereon we stood, as upon the back of some obliging Afreet.

Having satisfied our wonder we decided to return to the temple. By this time a thick but local roof of cloud had gathered over the hill, whose outlying spurs stood black as thunder against the sunlit plain before us. A scattered rain

began to fall, and we ran from shelter to shelter, testing the rainproof qualities of Indian trees. But when we reached the temple the sun was shining on the wet stones, and last rare drops of the shower.

I suggested to Ramudu that he should go into the Sanctuary (which out of delicacy perhaps he had hitherto refrained from doing) and tell me what was to be seen there. He walked up the steps to the door of the inner court, and after some words with the people sitting there, went in. Meanwhile I walked out of the main gate, where I met another party of worshippers, boys and women, carrying handfuls of coppers and a yellow garland as offerings to the God. The god worshipped in this temple is Narasimham, the Man-Lion Incarnation of Vishnu. The name Simhāchalam means the Hill of the Lion.

Ramudu rejoined me in the main street. He said that a young man, sitting in the doorway to receive offerings, had at first refused to allow him to enter, pretending not to believe that he was a Brahmin, apparently because he was walking with an Englishman. Ramudu had to show his sacred thread, and mention the name of his tribe. The young man, a priest's son, who now sat in holy nakedness and served the tables of orthodoxy, went at other times clothed in an English coat, and was a student in the second year class of the Vizagapatam college. . . . Ramudu said that the inner court contained finer and older sculpture than any to be seen outside, and that some of it reminded him of the sculpture of Bhuvaneswar, in Orissa, which we had recently visited. This was tantalising, for I could not entirely trust the young man's judgment in such nice

matter; and yet what he said was possible enough, and if true, vastly interesting to the student of such affinities.

Thus we came again to the main stair, and began to descend. We sat down sometimes upon a shady platform to look about us (for the scene of such a place should be allowed to sink into the memory) and stopped once at a great cistern to drink, check by jowl with lion-gargoyles and ramping stone hermsmen. My clumsiness in drinking from the hand was laughingly noticed by certain passers-by. From the same failing an anxious boatman once inferred that I could not swim; I had to race him to prove the weakness of his logic. Apparently the ancient East attaches as much significance to this operation as we to the way a man lights a match in a wind; for a khaki Gideon might perhaps be imagined, who should substitute this little ordeal by fire (and air) for his predecessors' method of selection by water-drinking.

Someone had stowed our bicycles in the yard of an office of the Rajah's, a pleasant old-fashioned building which stood among the plantains close to the foot of the temple-stair. From the back of this yard we suddenly strayed through a broken wall into a great empty pleasure-garden, a haunt as secret, solemn, and inconsequential as a dream. A straight path, heavily paved with stone, ran down the centre, and a number of similar pavements, crossing it at right angles, divided the garden into square beds of mould, each of which was a little jungle of bloomless rose-trees. In the centre of each square, brought here I know not how, was a large and handsome fountain, such as you might expect to see at Versailles or in an

Italian piazza, with a basin about it, and a dolphin, a Cupid, or headless Grecian goddess atop. In spite of these exotic features, the main plan of the garden was apparently copied, or traditional, from the great Mogul gardens of Cashmir and Hindustan ; for at the head of the garden two terraces, solidly faced with stone, were built against the side of the hill, one above the other. The lower terrace was furnished with a fountain and cistern yet larger than those below, and stairs, and pavilions of stone, and other statues, excellent ware, at which Ramudu gazed with Homeric wonder and delight, especially a Venus not unlike Canova's, he never having seen before in statuary anything like the grace and startling truth of the Greek tradition, though manifested now only in a garden ornament.

I mused, for I had come so far to see Babylonish idols, florid monsters, and fantastic emblems. The paradox would have puzzled the builder of this garden, whom I guessed to be the same old Rajah who had put the sacred rill into a pipe. However much one may abhor his taste, or wonder at his outlook, he was evidently no ordinary man ; and might perhaps in more propitious times have builded an empire, who had builded his odd pleasure-garden with such resource and thoroughness ; for it remained substantially entire despite what seemed posterity's neglect.

While Ramudu explored the last pavilions of the upper terrace, I stood and looked up at the hill beyond, and the green glen wherein the temple-stair went hidden in leaves. It was a pleasant prospect of palmy groves ' shade above shade, a

woody theatre.' Of its holy soil the Rajah doubtless intended to make use in the waterworks of his eclectic garden. I say 'his,' but I have since heard, and might have guessed, that he consecrated the garden to the service of the temple god. I have moreover been told (by Europeans) that the uses to which the garden has been put by the god's vicars on earth have not always been strictly decorous, and that the Parisian Cupids and Venuses had seen gaudy nights before they lost their heads. Such are the romantic scandals current among the god's enemies.

CHAPTER V

COROMANDEL FISHERS

THE unwritten jest-book of one of our southern hill-stations relates that a gentleman having appeared at a costume ball there in the character (not seldom affected on such occasions) of a Neapolitan fisherman, was shocked to find his disguise misreported 'Negapatam fisherman' in a Madras print. If local colour were as much the fashion in a jest as in a novel, this one should please ; for those only will favour it with understanding laughter, who know, not necessarily Negapatam (I have never been there myself), but some plot or strip at least of the long beaches that run from Bengal to Cape Comorin or Malabar, or for that matter far up, I know not how far, into the Arabian Sea.

If the reader will allow me to conduct him—whether by way of the Madras bazaars, or following the course of the sandbrook over the red palm-covered forehead of the Waltair hill—down to the great main troughs and heaps of tumbled sand that lie, fluted with tiny ripples, and looped all over with grey sea-grass, above such a beach as I have mentioned—

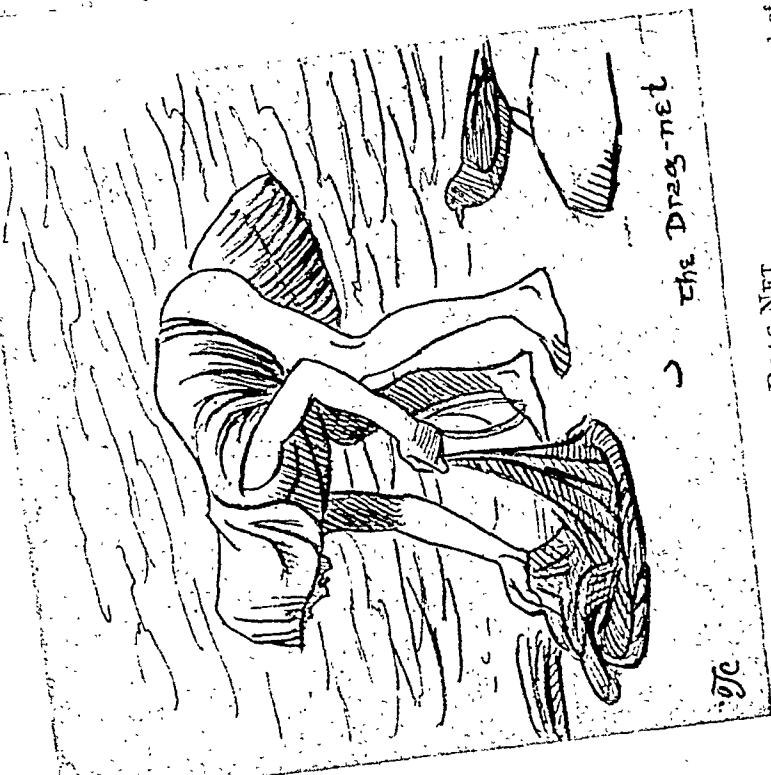
'Litus ut longe resonante Eoa tunditur unda.'

—where the Bengal rollers drown their own thunder in a fret of unavailing froth—if, I say, the reader will be at pains to follow me through such a puzzle of strange directions and subordinate clauses, he shall be set in a position to read the riddle ; to discover, as it were, the major promise of our merry syllogism.

There, by the cone-shaped huts of the fishing-village, woven of palm leaves ; where craft of unfamiliar shape lie moored, and uncouth nets are stacked or spread to dry in the sun ; pegging out a length of twine perhaps, or asleep under a sail-shelter, he shall see the Coromandel fisherman. The fellow's figure is picturesque enough in its own way ; naked and hard and lithe and black, he might be a bronze of Myron come to life, but never a fit ornament for a costume ball.

The reader will understand that I have not brought him to the shore of the Eastern Ocean merely to explain the point of a (not very plain) tale from the hills. I therefore propose boldly to fling aside an excuse that, I hope, has served its turn, and to ask him to explore the place with me for such romance and curiosity as it may afford. The beams of the sun will strike fiercely upon him, the glare of the lit sand will dazzle his eyes ; but if he is hardy and grateful he will find alleviation for either trouble in the salt breath and azure aspect of the sea, and ample compensation in the romance and curiosity aforesaid, in the aloofness of the fishermen's world, and its air of elemental eld.

Here is no sign of that hurry and fret which our countrymen have brought, like a plague from the West, into the very heart



THE DRAG-NET

THE DRAG-NET.
A riverside counterpart of the old fisher described at the end of Chapter V.



THE SANYASSI.

He has renounced the world, and is seen sleeping in the sun temple with all his worldly goods about him.

of India. Yet the pulse of the place moves, however, slowly. See how every seeming loiterer among the huts and boats carries in his hand (or hers) a weight upon a string, like an inverted top, whereon a thread is ever twisting, twisting. They carry it with them to the bazaars, they join the apparently subconscious care of it with all manner of business and vacancy, as if they were spinning the thread of their own lives, as indeed, in a sense, they are ; for of this thread are made the nets, by which they live.

Or turn to those for whom the reel, and Time, have not as yet begun to run. Listen to the laughter of the fisher-children yonder ; happy naked infants ! whose school is a little bay, where the blue flashing waters of the great world roll in with tempered violence ; their book a floating piece of board, bent over which they learn without sorrow the rudiments of that all-sufficing art, the management of the catamaran !

I had hoped that we should have arrived in time to see the catamarans go out through the surf. It sets the blood stirring to see the little vessels tilt into the line of green monsters, and rear up on end as they meet the impending coil ; while each pair or riders, like Saint Georges (but with a more workaday vigour than that golden youth displays upon the sovereign, for these are but poor copper champions) lean forward and ply the wrathful enemy with blows. Craft and riders hang poised for a moment on the ragged crest, then disappear as if engulfed, only to emerge and leap forward for a fresh encounter. I had hoped, I say, that the reader should have had an opportunity of witnessing this spectacle for himself. Since, however,

Fortune, or the Muse, have not seen fit so much to favour us, we must for the moment content ourselves with this description at secondhand, and take the occasion of vacant hours to inspect the craft as they lie upon the beach.

The catamaran fleet, thus disposed, resembles nothing so much as a timber-yard. The word *catamaran* (one of the few representatives of South Indian speech in the noisy Parliament of English words) means a 'tied tree'; and the Dravidian term is a very adequate and candid description of the Dravidian vessel. Three logs, each hewed into a rough semblance of the third part of a canoe, or rather, perhaps, of a large boomerang, are lashed together. The result is urged through the surf with paddles in the manner already described; and when the calmer spread of sea beyond is reached, if the wind is favourable, sailed with a low, broad, ochre sail. As soon as the returning vessel makes the sand, the partnership of the logs is again dissolved, and the hulking members carried up with labour out of the racing froth in slings of their own ligaments. I have myself been to sea in a catamaran. The experience in some respects resembles that of *trick-riding* in a circus, as I imagine it; in others, that of a sea-bath; which latter, indeed, in my own case it soon actually became.

Looming among the timbers of the catamarans upon the beach we may see the tall sides of other vessels, more deserving of the name; real 'hollow ships,' horned like a half-moon, and sewn together with great stitches of some fibrous rope. In the book of that venerable and very romantic author, Sir John Mandeville, there occurs what seems a reference to this

type of vessel, with a curious reason for the absence of nails. 'For in many places of the sea,' he says, speaking of these parts, 'be great rocks of stones of the *adamant*, that of his proper nature draweth iron unto him. And therefore pass no ships that have either bonds or nails of iron within them. And if there do, anon the rocks of the adamant draw the ships to them, that never they may go thence.'

Whether we accept this account, or prefer to follow Marco Polo, who adduces as a reason the fissile nature of the wood; or whether we suppose for ourselves simply that the designers of these vessels were unacquainted with the use of iron, still the circumstance remains, just as it was observed by the errant Frenchman and Venetian six hundred years ago.

The possession, or share, of a moon-shaped boat argues, I suppose, a position of some standing in the village; no vast capital can be represented by the ownership of the starboard or larboard beam (literally) of a catamaran. Yet there is a sort of fishers who are too poor even for this; whose only stock-in-trade is a rush basket and a long bell-shaped drag-net with a rope at the throat, armed with which they wander up and down the shore, picking what livelihood they may from the lips and edges of the sea.

Many a time from some Waltair sandhill of a morning have I watched one of them balance himself and his net for a throw, and the next moment stretched out aslant in the attitude of the fighting gladiator, while the flung net hangs displayed in the air before him, for all the world like the skeleton of a leaf picked up on dry jungle turf before the rains. Many a time, too, have

I drawn near and scrutinised the dripping shirt with an anxiety equal to his own, and found, alas ! too often nothing ; or else peeped into his wallet, where perhaps some palpitating fairy creature of the sea lies on a little heap of meaner silver.

Indeed you shall see strange fish sometimes if you attend the small informal auction sales that follow the homing of catamarans. But if I could endow the reader with the charm which Glaucus bore, proof against sharks and snakes, and the suffocation of the element—and, as I have already brought him so far afield, conduct him into the very treasuries of the tropic sea—if this could be, say, Muse, what wonders should reward him then ! Fishes of colours and shapes beyond fancy, as of more than all metals and rare stuffs ; living bronze and aluminium, silver and plush and satin ; forms of sinuous grace and oddest flourish of ornament, faces at fatuous gape, and cynic leer, and angry grin ! There should he see a very carnival of ocean, argosies, ironclads, torpedoes, dirigible balloons in marvellous miniature ; semblance of devils, dragons, jannisaries, nuns, butlers ; jesters' baubles, mad milliners' dreams. Though I threw away the art of words, and borrowed the pencil of Hokkei or Hokusai, I could not make known the half what should be seen.

I confess that I am in a position to make the revelations contained in the last paragraph in virtue of no Glaucon charm, or any privilege of the Muse ; my knowledge is merely the result of a visit to that little redbrick palace of wonders, the Madras Aquarium. Since the place is stocked almost entirely by the local fishermen, I make no scruple to avail myself of its tank-

lore here ; that you may know how it sometimes falls to the lot of our South Sea fishers to better, in the light of day, the lies of all the fishers you have known ; or the dream of the fisher in Theocritus, that he netted a fish of pure gold.

In association, for our minds, with such riches of sentiment and fancy moves the life of these, perhaps the poorest people in the world. It helps their own hard lot little enough, but the charm which their life has for contemplation lies largely in its power to bring us near to the lives of so many fishers of fame and fable, from whom the labourers of the northern seas are a folk apart. Over how many of them might be written that brief and bitter couplet of Sappho, the epitaph of the fisher Pelagon, whose father Meniskos put up his net and oar upon his grave, 'monument of an evil span.' Just such another, again, was that old fisher of the Arabian Nights, who fished up and broached the goblin bottled formerly by King Solomon. And here, were I writing a sermon, and not an essay for a school magazine,* I might without irreverence prefer the example of those Galileans, who after became fishers of men ; in whose nets we all were caught. I shall rather conclude, as more appropriate, with another citation from the Greek, also an epitaph, found by me lately in the *Anthology*, and Englished here in uncertain elegiacs. The work of Italiot Leonidas of Tarentum, it might without unfitness be applied (but not, I hope, for many days yet) to that old and lonely retiarius of the Waltair beach, into whose basket the reader lately peeped.

* This chapter was originally printed in *The Abingdonian*.

' The treble-agéd Theris, that out of the silvery meshes
Gleaned his living, and swam neater than bird o' the rocks ;
Pool-despoiler, lord of the drag-net, looter of grottoes
 (For small truck Theris had with a mariner's blade) ;
Him not the rough-haired Wind-Star slew, nor shattering tempest
Shore at a blast the ripe tens of his clustering years ;
Nay, he died in his little reed-cabin, eve'n as a candle
 That, of her own consent, languisheth after a time,
This tomb neither children of his, nor bedfellow builded,
 But his toiling mates of the longshore, fishermen all.'

CHAPTER VI

THE COOL WEATHER

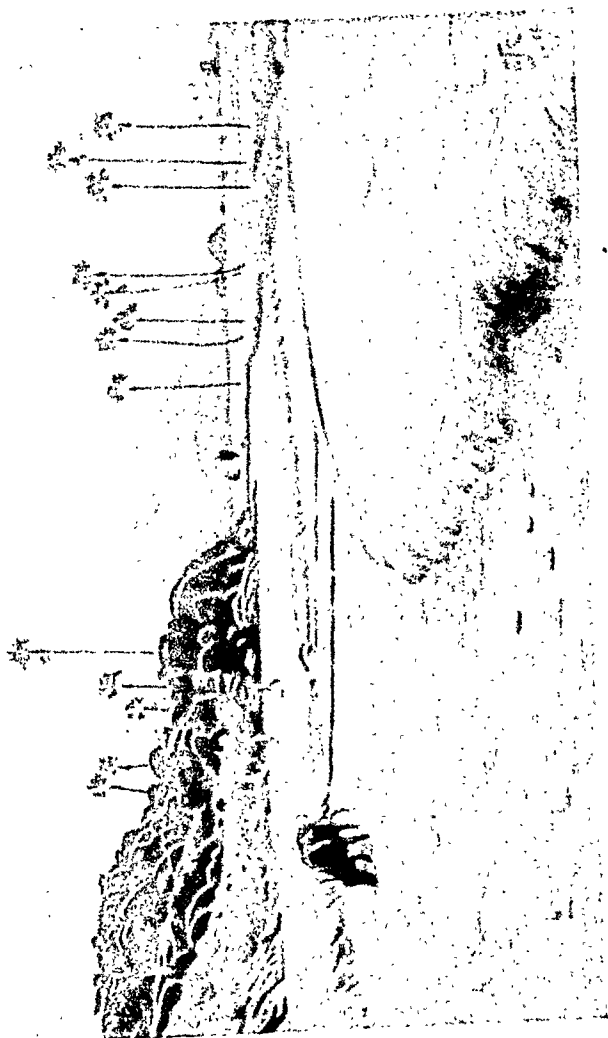
I

A POWERFUL rainy season will sometimes annex October and November to his temporal dominion ; but as a rule the latter month is allowed to strike an amiable compromise, and hesitate between the grey and green of the rains, on the one hand, and the blue and gold of the tropic winter on the other. My account of the monsoon has chiefly concerned itself with spectacular, or what Ruskin would call ' theoretic ' effect ; I have said little of temperature ; but in order to understand the mercy of the after season, the reader must remember that the period just described, though bleak enough in the gloom and actual passage of its cataclysmic spells, is yet for the most part hot and humid to a degree, which many find less easily sufferable than the scorch of summer itself. But with November a renovating freshness begins to grow upon the air, shyly at first and darkling, like the nocturnal water-lily ; or as it were a young conspiracy, soon to occupy the gates of the morning and evening, and moderate the tyranny, though not the splendour, of the noon.

For with November begins also the issue of that shining

coinage of days, and gilt-edged securities of the sun, which continues almost without break or alteration for eight months of the Indian year. It might be thought that such a flood and uniformity of sunlight would soon become monotonous; and I know not whether it be the long preceding gloom of the rains, or the deeper instinct and sun-hunger of the northern islander, that makes one persist as one does, despite a kindling glare and heat, in regarding sunshine as the symbol of life and gladness. The sun represents but one partner and principle of the dualism of which the bliss of life is born; he is terrible in his undivided power, and of his 'tamasic' or destructive single aspect there is assuredly in India evidence enough; yet hardly in the blank and arctic barrenness of midsummer noon itself, when the excess of his vehemence shall have dulled his own light in a sanguine haze, will the sense of his genial virtue be suspended. For the present his blaze of noon is clear and white with an incandescence never known without the tropic; and the horizontal fires of morning and evening wash the world in punctual alternation, as with a red, pure, windless flame of sacrifice. There is something sublime, and reminiscent of the scripture, in the elemental clarity, and unveiled revolutions of the heaven, which sometimes obtain for weeks about this time. Now in a sense less qualified than usual, and unimpaired by creeping mists, the divine ordinance prevails: the sun to rule the day, the moon and the stars to govern the night.

Henceforward we observe also the changes of the moon, and divide the bright fortnight from the dark, as Englishmen at home never have occasion to do. Indian moonlight has not



THE END OF THE RICEFIELD, ANAKAPALLI.

lacked the praise, either of travellers or native poets. If Athens and Corinth have the same moon, the fact as between Europe and Asia might be disputed on, and that Chandra and Diana are not of the same substance. The Indian is a male moon ; his beam at the full has the same white electric quality reduced, as the Indian sun at midday ; both at their brightest in the temperate and clear air of November.

It is perhaps by reason of this brightness and temperate air that the two full-moon nights about October and November are celebrated by Indian boys and girls as an occasion of general play and roaming out-of-doors, a sort of May-day of the antipodes. The lads are abroad all night, and sometimes play Puck-like pranks, as exchanging signboards between a coffee-vendor and a lawyer ! No doubt the Indian moonlight, lovely as it is, is better loved by comparison of the noon's glare and heat. ' Nothing is good, I see, without respect,' said Shakespeare, dreaming of ' such a night as this.'

Nor is the dark or starry half of the month without honour at this season. Now is celebrated Depāwali, the Lamp Festival, or Hindu Candlemas ; with which is mingled a strong Fifth-of-November element also, caught, one might almost suppose, from proximity in time, as the merriment of the heathen Saturnalia is said to have infected Christmas ; unless a profounder common tradition underlies the coincidence. Every pial, niche and window-sill is studded with such lamps as the wise virgins bore, little pointed flames afloat in a saucer of oil. Fireworks, not so sweetly solemn, hiss and snap and fume in the streets, rocket-fires scrawl impiously across the scripture of the

stars. Departing, we ride out of the noise and smoke into the fields, where a brilliance of fireflies seems to prolong the lucid rite.

Throughout the Indian month in which this feast occurs, little twinkling lights may be observed over the roofs of the devout. They are intended as a guidance to the gods, who are supposed to fly about busily at this season, on what business I have forgotten. In the matter of all such service, I notice, the gods are content with the merest suggestion.

When I praise the steadfast skies, I must not be supposed to speak of a final settlement of all the year's remaining weather. Morning mists we have that veil the river, and clouds to invest the sunset ; variable temperature within the seasons, even a rare shower. English readers are always ready to believe that tropical conditions are even more strange and different than the picturesque rhetoric of the traveller wishes to suggest, even when that wish itself aims beyond veracity ! One never verifies Coleridge's description of tropic nightfall, ' at one stride came the dark.' The tropic twilight is short enough, God wot, but there it is, twenty minutes of it, eminently precious ; in Indian November, and mainly when the half-moon is high to eke them out, and soften their departure, the twenty delicatest minutes (if time may be divided spatially) in all the world.

II

Thus far the heaven above ; and on the answering earth the season slowly changes shape and colour. The green turf

pales, the lighter plumage of the landscape disappears. The river slacks her march, and her turbid current suddenly becomes clear, as if by some divine application of that virtuous grain, which the women place in their pitchers to purify a draught of August flood-water. In the wet lands the vivid green of the rice-field fades before it is turned into gold. The dry country, less willing to yield its treasure of life, still consoles the eye with the bluer emerald of the growing maize (*cholan*).

I have already explained this two-fold aspect of the Indian Ceres, which persists throughout the year. The manifold business of the rice harvest begins about Christmas, and culminates in the Pongol, or harvest celebration, which follows so hard upon the Christian feast, as to embarrass schoolmasters of the new order, who would like to honour both. We will return to the rice harvest presently.

In the region under dry cultivation the standing maize is the principal feature from beginning of December to end of January ; throughout the season, that is to say, of coolest air ; and a very prominent principal feature it is, bristling the land for miles. If rice is the wheat of the fairies, maize is the corn of the giants. It stands higher than a tall man's height ; an army might walk upright through maize-country unobserved ; and the ears upon the stalk of it are stout and long as fir-cones topping Bacchanal spears. Infinitely delicate in figure and colour and sheen, under the solar as the lunar noon, is the great heart of this world of stalk and blade and bearded cob, so long as the juice of it is fresh and supple ; and as the season of ripeness approaches, and the chthonic feast stands spread to

tempt the harpies of earth and air, the whole vast plain bestirs itself, and becomes as noisy and almost as dangerous, one might suppose, as an epic battle-field.

Watchfires twinkle at nightfall between the red dy squadrons, and all day from the middle of each green phalanx frantic sentinels, standing upon watchtowers of palmyra-wood and armed with slings, deliver a steady stream of syllables mixed with stones, and calculated to carry further, and convey a profounder sense of the unpleasantness in store for impious fowls, than any other syllables yet invented. The parrots and mynas nibble and browse in odd corners notwithstanding, but with bewildered souls, and perhaps impaired digestions.

III

Meanwhile in the wet lands (wet no longer), the rice harvest has begun. The Indian countryside has an unique and ineffable charm, for which I have long cherished a rooted kindness; and it was the reaped rice-fields, I remember, seen in the rosy sunlight and settled clarity of January evenings, which first compelled me to acknowledge a passion more properly entitled tender, than the state of mind conventionally so called. Level as a book the shaven plain, but subdivided by little earthen ridges into shallow squares innumerably lessening, stretches away to the clear horizon, with its fringe of groves, or one fantastic hill. Palmyras dot it, and yellow ricks of straw and heaps of grain, and men and oxen congregated to perform, in solemn scriptural

fashion, yet not without rude laughter and song, the threshing or the winnowing, or other harvest service.

There is a fragrance of the fallow rice-fields, due perhaps to a little weed one finds resembling clover, which always typifies for me the sense of purity and peace, of soul-enlargement, almost of antenatal memory, that pervades the place and season, and bestows a kind of majesty upon the simple husbandman, a kind of sanctity upon his tawny fields, and village of sunbaked thatch and clay.

The South Indian farmer, indeed, with his grand brown torso and glint of gold at ear and wrist, his turban and loose-girt loin-cloth of spotless white, his bamboo staff, and huge fantastic sandal shoon, has a dignity, a rustic elegance even, unknown to his English counterpart. These husbandmen of the Telugu countryside, Kapus, Kammas, Reddis, claim to have been a ruling race in former times; are of an open and free conversation, and with the curled coiffure affect the style and carriage of the princely Kshatriya, rather than the moiling Sudra.

Altogether they excite in the stranger a peculiar interest and curiosity. Their skins of richest brown seem to preclude the supposition of Aryan descent, yet their features have all the refinement which we associate with our own stock; one might almost say that, apart from what I am often tempted to consider, with Schopenhauer and Bishop Heber, the superior natural beauty of dark skins, beauty of feature is commoner among them, than with us; and there is especially to be found among their youth, side by side no doubt with an occasional tendency to the negroid, less common in Europe, a certain curled

figure of the lips, discoverable elsewhere only in Greek statues. I have heard it advanced, that somewhat such is the true Dravidian type, of which ethnologists talk so much, and know so little; and that the same race may have preceded and qualified the Caucasian in Greece.*

I speak here chiefly of the superior rustics, for the personal types of the Telugu countryside are extraordinarily manifold and various. Here is a note of a morning ride written in my diary, several years ago, when such details had still the significance of novelty. 'I drew rein to look at the shorn fields about Razole, with goats going forth, and men carrying clean straw, and a little brown boy in a big turban sitting under a cart, who presently came over to stare at the horse, and with his bright eyes, shapely features, black ringlets, and clear and richly coloured skin, his gold bangles and his fine linen, made a curious contrast with a naked, black and ghoulish goatboy with a big cheroot, who followed him.'

The picture reminds me of the nursery rhyme, which I quoted in my first chapter. Here were a Kamma and a Golla, subcastes of the Sudra. Place a Brahmin boy beside them for completeness: a slip of a body coloured like old ivory, head shaven to the crown, a little horsetail of black hair behind, a castemark on the forehead over pensive eyes, a mere point,

* It has been suggested that the Dravidians are of the old Mediterranean race. They are oftener regarded as connected with the Sumerians, the first civilisers of Babylonia. Mr. H. R. Hall (*Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 174), thinks that the Sumerians were Dravidians from India. There is a language of Dravidian affinities, the Brahui, in Baluchistan, showing that the Dravidians once passed that way in one direction or the other.

perhaps, like a belle's cheek-patch called to order ; a costume like the Kammas, but that the turban is probably worn as a scarf. Here should follow the refrain about ' necklace and collaret, and a little brass rattle.'

It has been my fate to wander to these fields, like a translated scholar-gipsy,

' And with the country-folk acquaintance make '

to know ' each field, each tree, each stick ' in a region as unlike his (and mine before) in outward colour, as can well be imagined. I have found my Fyfield Elm in a palatial banyan, my Cumnor Hurst in an outwork of the Eastern Ghauts. Lesser landmarks, a row of stakes in the river, a solitary clump of palms, I have come to regard with the same unconscious piety as erstwhile certain rural dens and bulks of my native country.

But these new familiars retain a certain oddness, a power of surprise in spite of knowledge, ' fallings from us, vanishings ' ; and this intertexture of strangeness and entire acquaintance has a sweet and subtle fascination. So has the friendship of the peasants, which seemed at first like enquiring into the antecedents of a dream-company. The mystery is latent yet in all such intercourse ; while the old, elemental, universal spell of country things grows stronger, as their novelty of aspect fades.

In a lonely lane occurs perhaps the inevitable toddy-drawer, harnessed like a soldier of the Pharaohs in marching order, with his rude corset of leather, and complement of sickle-knives, the whole hooped in the great life-belt (for his life hangs upon

it) of twisted fibre, with which he clasps and climbs the many-fathomed shaft of the palmyra, like a toy monkey on a stick. To-day he stands looking disconsolately up at the shock-head of the tree, where his earthen pots, applied this morning to catch the juice, cluster like a kind of huge black fruit. Some rascal, he tells us, while he went for food, has slipped up the tree, drunk the contents of one of his patient pots, and broken it.

In the next field we come upon young Gubbayya, so he names himself, sitting under a stack, and twisting palm-fibre into plough-ropes with the air of a copper angel. He is only a Mala, it seems, though he wears curled locks like a Rajput. We ask whether it was he that drank the drawer's toddy, which passes for an apt piece of rustic banter, none the worse that it is quite possibly founded on fact. These country names, Gubbayya, Amman, Abalu, Masarayya, syllables uncouth, intractable to the etymologist, true Dravidian of the soil, and archetypal, delight us, though a stranger might find them less alarming than the long Sanskrit compounds, and threaded innumerable names of God, in which, like spells and small compendious prayers, the Brahmins love to dress their own urbaner personalities.

Somewhat further on a big farmer, who with his sons is doing a little unseasonable ploughing, complains of the times, allows us to mar a yard of furrow, and shows with pride his baby boy, his little Benjamin; a fine youngster indeed, divinely naked, but upon inspection perhaps not quite so perfect and exquisite a carven cherub as he seemed at a little distance.

But what of the village where these good folk live, Razole,

or Kadium, or Korukonda; places outlandish and remote, where you may lose yourself among the centuries? Islanded high among the ridges of the rice-fields, its uncouth and clay-built streets and lanes, scarped like low cliffs, might seem to grow out of the earth, and share her solidity and age; yet the house-fronts painted white, with a broad red border of old earthen pigment, and yard-walls vertically striped with white and red of the same, lack not the comely gaiety proper to human habitations. The roofs alike of house and yard-wall (for the latter also has its little eaves) are commonly of palmyra-thatch, the ragged fringe of the house-roof spreading low over the rude verandah cavern, and the pillared pial or dais that flanks the steps of the entrance. Through this in a dark hall appears perhaps a swing or curious cradle slung, and beyond, the court or rustic atrium, and further thresholds of the family colony; furnished, say, with a rice-mortar and naked babies and a nursling calf, and pitchers of earth and brass, and other rustic objects, mademostly of the same materials as the house, of wood and earth, the palm-leaf, the bamboo.

In the lane without walks Rebecca with her pitcher to the public well, or little Jacob drives afield his sheep and goats. Here the weaver vexes his long threads, flitting from trestle to trestle; here the potter, that inveterate live parable, spins his wheel; between his delicate and oozy fingers the wet clod grows like a magic flower: his hobbled fighting-cock looks on. Description should visit also the embankment of the great pond, which is almost a lake; and the temple, if such there be, a rude abortion of Dravidian art; but sometimes the sacred omphalos

of the village is marked only by the altar of some religious tree, with a wooden post bearing the wheel of Vishnu, and perhaps a little sheaf of firstfruits, of which the gods partake in the person of green parrots.

I once spent a Christmas holiday in the neighbourhood of such a village, with nothing else to do but to kill time and curiosity. Perhaps the account of my experience which follows will serve, better than anything else, to acquaint the reader with the difficult-homely subject I have undertaken in this book and chapter.

CHAPTER VII

SERINGAPATNAM

I

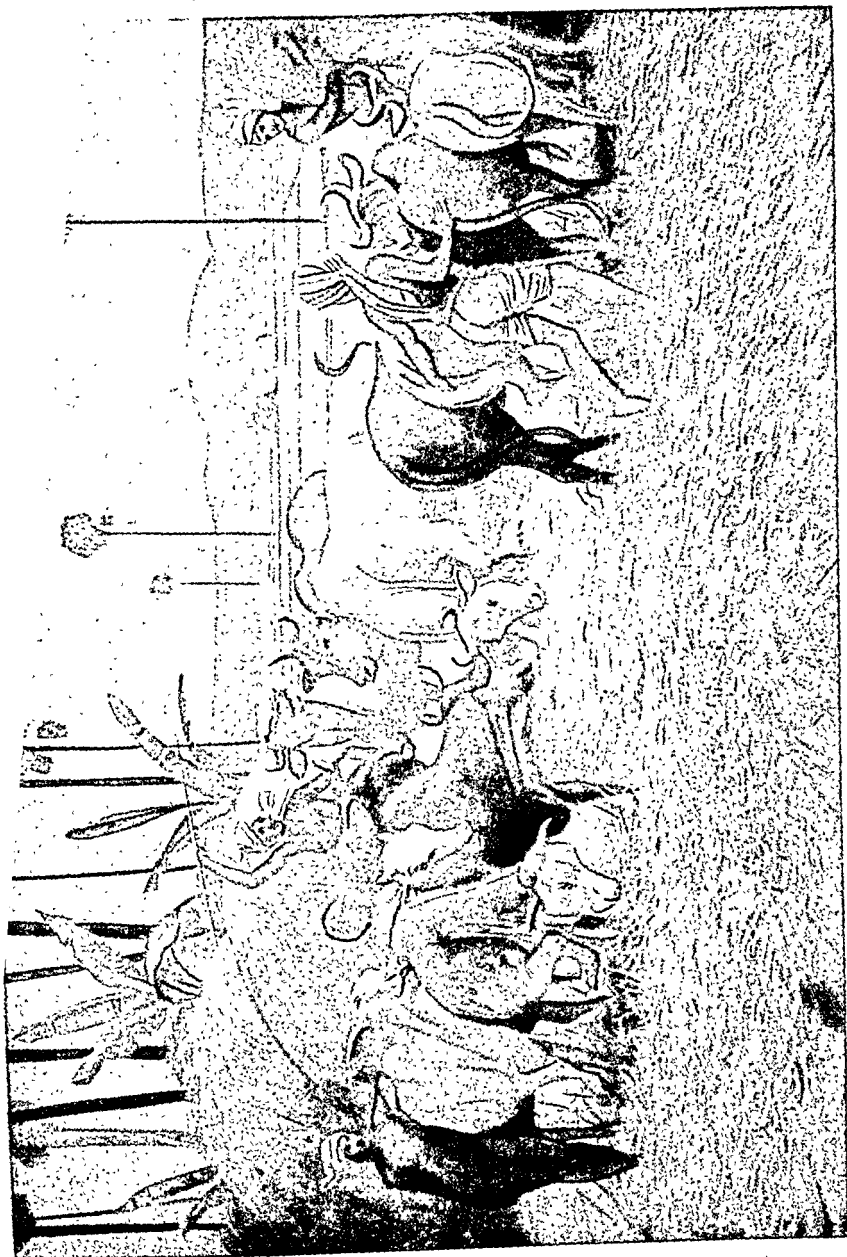
THE place bore the name of Tipoo's famous fortress, but was indeed the most peaceful, inglorious, and out-of-the-way village imaginable ; whose grandest policy and civic dream was of being some day joined by a hard road to the trunk highway, whereof the great banyan-avenue was just visible across level fields.

Seringapatnam lies to the north of Rajahmundry, and close to the nearest of those assembled hills, that make our blue horizon-barrier in that direction ; higher there, and changed from blue to purple and russet. The rice-fields stretched away to the foot of the hills, and ran among them in creeks and inlets like a sea. Sudden hills, often curiously conical, the red outposts of the range, were all about us. The tranquil-spacious landscape of the rice-fields is then most transcendently suggestive and fraught with exaltation—sublime indeed, if that may be called sublime, in which sweet austerity supplies the place of fear—when seen, as along all this coast it may be seen, in contrast and conjunction with these wild outworks of the Eastern Ghauts.

The village and its folk did not belie that dream and memory of the Genesis, which the severe and simple dignity of the landscape conveyed. The manners and customs of the Old Testament still held good among them, and the nascent 'civilisation' of our country town seemed very far away; so far, indeed, that I forgot it entirely, and frequently found myself thinking of A—— in English B——shire, as the home to which I should return when my visit was over.

In point of fact we had merely ridden some fourteen miles out of the town, a rather empty ride across wide plains, a-rustle with maize or fallow-silent, where once a picket of deer lifted head to gaze at us before dancing off. I was the guest of an old student of mine, so far as a foreigner can, in the uncompromising countryside, be the guest of a Brahmin; that is, I pitched my tent in his mango-orchard, and he made arrangements for my provisioning from the village.

Nagabhushanam (as we may call him for the present) was then a law student on vacation from Madras. He had been the first of his house and neighbourhood to taste the forbidden fruit of Western education. His father and uncles dwell together in a big rambling homestead in the village, where the family has lived for centuries, tilling ancestral acres. Others of the younger generation have now followed Bushanam's example, and a little white-robed troop of English-speaking brothers and cousins, mixed with unspoiled, shirtless country scions, used to gather at my tent, students either of the College or High School at Rajahmundry. Such was Bushanam when I knew him first. A spring of graceful fancy, breaking sweetly



TREADING OUT THE RICE.

in the desert of college exercises, first made us friends. He has often told me of his native landscapes, and at last persuaded me to go and see them for myself.

From under a roof of boughs my tent door looked forth across the shaven plain to the blue and purple swathing of the hills. The village was half a mile away to the north and out of sight, but the village folk would visit me at all hours, the mean man to feed his wonder, the more honourable to pay his respects, or both. Neat-herd boys and harvesters, wandering early afield, would pass, or portly goodmen, calculating the profits of the year. Cattle and goats, the walking wealth of the country, filed before me in review, and once a great solitary bull, patriarch of the village in that kind.

On the first evening I was taken to the threshing-floor, where the work of treading out the rice-grain was in progress. The sight was not so familiar to me then as it has since become, and I could not have been more strangely moved had I visited the threshing-floor of Araunan the Jebusite. The floor itself was merely a great swept tonsure of the level stubble-field, but the surface of the baked earth was as smooth and hard as a floor of concrete. From time to time the reaped rice was taken from the sheaf-stack and heaped in the middle of this space, whence it was raked by the naked harvesters and strewn piecemeal at the feet of sixteen oxen, which was driven about the heap in endless revolution. In front of the wheeling herd a harvester, with his bamboo staff held stiff behind his back between outstretched hands walked singing an ancient charm or Lityerses song of the rice-fields, solemn and plaintive, sweet and vague as

the song of the Highland reaper that Wordsworth heard. Huddled and fawning, the mild-eyed beasts followed their bucolic Orpheus, belaboured with following staves whenever they slipped the weak charm of the music and paused to snatch at the stalks, headed off and browbeaten when they would have broken at a tangent into the stubble.

Without the orbit of the oxen was thrown a broad wreath of straw, deep and clean, into which we sank, choosing the windward arc to avoid the dust of the husks; and watched a spectacle, so full of life, and yet as old as history. 'Muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn'; the Hebrew precept was observed that day. It is not considered binding, I notice, when the great maize-ears are in question, for these are trodden without stalks, and many would be eaten. Beyond the circle of the straw a grisly band of water-buffaloes waited their turn to labour. This will come as soon as the moon is lit, for the uncouth monsters, born of the slime, will not work in the heat of the day.*

Next afternoon we saw the winnowing in the same place. Men standing on trestles held the grain aloft in a tray or shovel-head of reed, and gently shook and spilled it in the breeze, which the constant season provides unasked, and which carries off the husk; the several heaps appear, as if by magic, at the foot of

In *Wonders of the Past*, No. 16 (Amalgamated Press, 1922, London) there is a photograph of a bas-relief from an Egyptian mustaba, in which the scene here described is faithfully represented, not omitting the man with the stick who walks in front of the oxen. The article on ancient Egyptian agriculture by Mr. D. A. Mackenzie, which it illustrates, affords a number of other astonishing parallels (which it would be tedious to enumerate) with the Indian methods described in this chapter.

the trestle. This operation we all essayed, the country lads deftly enough, I clumsily.

The same evening we observed a curious custom of sealing the heaps of grain at night with seals of sand. These were hung all round the woven straw-cover of the heap, little cakes of damped sand signed with characters, like the seals upon a document. Any tampering with the heap defaces the fragile seals, and the master knows that his watchers have been false or negligent. The straw and palm-leaf sentry-boxes of the watchers are set within a dozen paces of the treasure. These shelters are pleasant images of simple comfort, and show much individuality and invention in a rustic medium. They suggest rudely many figures, from a bed of state to a corn-fairy's wigwam.

About the sheaves and yellow litter of these Indian threshing floors, overpeering the labourers and the oxen, the gleaners, the watchers, the lesser neighbour come to share the good man's superfluity, how many invisible shapes and universal Powers assemble, of aspect not less solemn, but more affable than his, that folded a shadowy wing over the Jebusite's of old ! Here are to be found Simplicity and golden Plenty, Labour and Festival side by side ; the fulness of the Present joins hands with an antiquity beyond Saturn, and solitary Nature smiles upon the social Genius of Man. Among all such nooks and plots of space, and bulks of inanimate matter, as have been shaped by Nature or by man or both to pleasant uses, and have individuality enough to gather vital associations, and achieve as it were a kind of lovable and reverend personality—among hills, islands, rivers, among wells, gardens, roads, buildings, bridges—there

are few that in richness of significance excel the Indian threshing-floor.

II

I have spoken of wells and gardens. On the other side of the sandy lane that ran past my mango-orchard was a fruit-garden, the memory of which is one of the most fragrant of the many fragrant memories which I owe to this visit. A South Indian fruit-garden is an asylum of lush leaves and shadow and gurgling water, very grateful in the drought of the year. Living on the outskirts of a town, I am a neighbour to many such, pleasant places to walk in of a morning. The fruits chiefly grown are the coconut, plantain, and orange, or its cousin lime, or certain larger relatives. These town gardens, the property of enterprising citizens, are laid out with system on a considerable scale, and exhibit a certain austere geometry, reminiscent in a different sphere of the landscape of the rice-fields.

The heart of the garden is the well, where two pairs of oxen, working on a slope, haul up in huge leathern buckets the silver life-blood of the plants, and pour it into conduits built of brick, which stretch like rectangular arteries throughout the length and breadth of the garden, and distribute water at the gardener's will. The orange-trees and plantains are set in open and regular order, and the soil about the roots of them is ploughed. The plantain-garden, with its loose leaves like enormous rumpled paddle-blades, catches the sunlight in a thousand transparencies and sheens, offering a lively contrast to the sober aisles of the

orange-close, trim and motionless as the painted trees that guard the state of a Florentine Madonna.

Our rustic garden had neither the size nor discipline of these civic plantations. Fruit-trees prevailed of the kinds mentioned, but they were planted in irregular groups, and there were roses also and other flowers here and there, and a variety of plants and vegetables without order and beyond catalogue. The conduits were made rudely of earth ; the ground was partly tilled and partly turfed, and on the turf a few favoured cattle grazed.

But what chiefly endeared this garden to me was the entire absence, amid much evidence of life and thrift, of marks and symbols of the modern West, or any age and thought later than Virgil. The gardens and garden-houses near the town naturally receive some of the tin tribute of Europe out of the bazaars ; they eschew not empty oil cans, or corrugated iron ; their owners trifle with new inventions, and a rusty cogwheel, or other discarded fragment of machinery, is no infrequent sight at a well-side, near the huge timber frame of pulleys at which the oxen labour ; a reminder of some old ambition of the owners to be up-to-date and economical, and raise water by means of a single ox and a patent pump. Two garden-owners known to me have even succeeded in abolishing oxen altogether in favour of an oil-engine ; and one of them, as if in order to illustrate with a paradox the difference between the æsthetic outlook of modern East and West, has actually built his bower and pleasure-arbour opposite the fearsome thing !

In the heart of our rustic garden also there was a garden-

house, but before it rose only a circular garner of clay set upon wooden trestles, in shape not unlike a little fixed and vanless windmill. Under the wide eaves of this lesser structure's conical thatch was heaped or hung a most curious and choice collection of country furniture; empty shells of the gourd and coconut, the root of a palmyra carved into a well-bucket, a palm-leaf umbrella, a basket of reed, a net and a cage for tank-fishing, bamboo ladders, a log of mango half-sawn into planks, and a tangle of palm-fibre. In rude relief upon the wall was plastered the figure of a man or demon, whose function was to avert the evil eye; while another and kindlier token of rustic piety, a dainty little sheaf of bearded ears, a first-fruit, or thank-offering, was hung from a trellis near.

I took as much delight in contemplating this miscellany of lumber, as my neighbour in his oil-engine. Rather profanely I took from under the thatch of the garden-house a leathern collar, fringed with seashells and a double row of little brass bell-drops, the jewellery worn, I was told, by the favourite family cow at certain interesting periods. I begged it with difficulty, and have it hung in my verandah still, in memory of the place. For if walking in the fields without was like a lesson from the Bible, to be in the garden was like reading in a Georgic.

Near the garden-house was the well. The garden was not large enough to require oxen to water it, and instead of the usual frame of pulleys, there was built over the well a water-lift, or 'pikotah'; a curious engine, such as may be often seen in South Indian fields, and which looks from a distance like one of those prehistoric telescopes which our comic artists feign.

Its principal member is a lever or long beam, being the half of a split palmyra-stem, which swings upon a post or the fork of a tree, and upon which a man walks up and down like an acrobat, lifting or sinking the bucket as the ends of the beam rise or fall. Another stands on a frame-work built across the well, and tilts the bucket over the mouth of a conduit. Not only the beam, but almost all the parts and fittings of this venerable engine are made, like so much else of our country furniture, from the versatile palmyra; even the basin-bucket is carved out of the round root or bole-end, and the lashings woven of the fibre.

The well was a large one notwithstanding, wide enough to swim in, and the water in it deep and black. Indian wells have a size, dignity, and significance unknown to the wells of northern climates. Incidentally they play a part as prominent in tales and proverbs, as in life. The genius of our garden-well was a fish, which was said to eat *rats*. The word started a Cockney echo in my brain, which would have been Greek to my companions. I watched sceptically when a victim was brought in dead from the ricks and thrown upon the water. Even while I scoffed a blacker gulf opened under the little carcase, and it vanished upon a deep and hollow sob.

Prompted by that instinct of the circus, of which these Brahmin boys have so little, I persuaded the gardeners to put a live rat into the well. This also Leviathan swallowed, to the surprise of all his human neighbours. We used to watch for him when the sun shone into the well at noon. He was more than four feet long, a Gargantuan gudgeon of the tropics;

from the corners of his mouth floated a pair of gruesome feelers, like those attributed to a Chinese dragon.

One day a small ring-snake, a very poisonous creature, spotted like a panther, caused some excitement by falling into the well, where it swam round and round, the great fish being wiser than to touch it. There were several of us round the well, watching the efforts of the gardeners to salve the snake with long bamboos, from which it always fell before it reached the parapet. At last one cheery rustic, with a vigorous heave, hoisted the reptile high into the air. Some of us stood, some ran; all laughed, except perhaps myself. Luckily the man who had been standing where the snake came down had elected to run, so that no harm came of the incident, except to the snake. It will be seen that even our pleasant garden had its dangers; but a paradise, without a snake, were incomplete.

The fields have other antique and rural methods of lifting water than those mentioned. Thus when water has to be carried along an irrigation-dyke from a lower to a higher level, two men stand on either side of the little dam and swing between them a basket upon ropes, scooping up the water and flinging it over the dam. The action is very graceful, especially when two pairs are at work together; the rhythmical concerted swing of the four bodies, the deft play of the wrists, the strong catch at the gurgling water forward, and the light and swift recovery, reminding one of the motion of rowers in an English racing eight-oar. I attempted the operation with considerable success; I think the classic lore of Isis stood me in good stead for once.

III

I have spoken of isolated hills. We used to visit a hill each evening for exercise. They were not easy to climb nor to descend, being covered with loose stones and brakes, but a black citadel and crown of granite often offered firmer footing. Thence we would look out westward as far as the sand and silver of Godavery, or northward into the heart of the jungles that clothed the folds of the Ghauts. Someone would speak of deer in this place and tiger there, but for tangible spoil of the wild life of the hills we were satisfied to bring home the wing-feather of a blue jay, or mottled quill of a porcupine.

In the course of these walks we threaded many a pleasant country nook, waiting for an Indian Morland or Gainsborough to give it imaginative currency. Here, hid in bosky tangle, sere and crisp, like nearly all the lighter vegetation of the season, was a deep, dry, sandy watercourse, crossed by the stem of a palmyra for a bridge. Here among plough-beams by the fantastic hole of a tamarind was a wooden frame for the planting of paddy, a kind of outlandish sleigh, to be drawn through tropic slime instead of snow. Bushanam showed me a grand clump of bamboos, to which he said he had addressed his first poem. For Bushanam is a poet, like many Indian students. I almost shared his memory, and felt his kindness for the place.

These bamboos drooped, like dark green ostrich feathers, over a sandy track, known as the 'way of the army,' because by this road the police from Rajahmundry marched to meet the Rampa rebels, when they came out of the hills in the sixties.

This obscure episode of history looms large in the unwritten chronicles of Seringapatnam. They told me how the police arrived 'with guns' but ran away when they saw the fierceness of the hillmen, so that the rebels occupied and plundered the village, but somehow went no further into the plains. Bushanam's great-grandmother, being in childbed at the time, was unable to take to the jungle with the other villagers (including presumably her own unchivalrous men folk), but got no harm. There was a braver memory of another woman, a Judith of the ricefields, who upon pretence of shewing hidden treasure pushed the leader of the rebels into a well.

.

Then we would visit and explore the broad reservoirs, artificial lakes rather, but we call them baldly 'tanks'—common everywhere in India, but here particularly large and plentiful. Their treasure of water was already half expended, leaving wide skirts of green; but enough remained, I know not for what material uses, but at least to glass majestically the red hills and the lustre of the sky, to carry splendid lilies, and to serve as a refuge for innumerable waterfowl.

The study of these and other birds was not the least interesting of our employments. My young friends were delighted with my binoculars, as with a magic instrument, for the old Hindu culture is a comely but somewhat unaccommodated state, and I have learned from the fresh wonder of these lads to value many an occidental property unprized before. For the birds we saw, the curious ducks, the herons, large and small, the green and the

pie kingfishers, are they not written in the book of Jerdon? The weeds also and the waterflowers you will find catalogued in some such tome, but not their fresh colour and lissome grace, not the rank-sweet fragrance of them, which was after all only a sad-sweet memory of Thames backwaters.

We rode the nearest and broadest lake in a craft composed of three palmyra dug-outs lashed abeam, and piloted by a local fisherman. He was a magnificent rude bronze, a freshwater Triton as it were; one of a shoal that had made their way to these inland waters from the sea-coast. He spoke a language uncomprehended of the villagers, which I recognised as a corrupt Hindustani, the half-forgotten lingua-franca of the surf-boats.

IV

I have already written perhaps at greater length than the duration of my stay warranted. But I must say something of our visit to the Korukonda temple, since this was one of the main objects of my journey. Korukonda is the village next to ours toward the road, and distant by the field path perhaps a mile and a half. It is not larger than Seringapatnam, but would seem better to deserve a famous name, for the memory of ancient local glory, and pride of petty empire, broods above its thatch and clay. In the fourteenth century the rule of the Reddi chiefs of Korukonda spread southward beyond Rajahmundry to the Delta. Little trace of the dynasty remains, but they seem to have taken their own state very seriously, and

aped the devices and vanities of less trivial empires. Like the kings of Devagiri, they must carve their suite of caves for eremites from some rocky hill near the capital. These we found among the brakes in the course of one of our evening rambles, empty chambers devoid of ornament, sorry rivals of Ellora, unless indeed some earlier band of saints, in this land of immemorial piety, wrought them here in the jungle. Like Solomon, too, and Pericles, the kings of Korukonda must needs build a temple on a hill.

They chose one of the red hills already spoken of ; in height some three hundred feet, very steep, a cone as regular as Fuji's. The gleam of the god's whitewash can be seen as far as Rajahmundry. At the foot of the hill on this side lies the village, on the other the sacred tank, full of our finest white and crimson lilies. The stone stair is narrow and steep ; a roofed gate, halfway up, makes a welcome resting-place.

Save for the space occupied by the little propylæum at the head of the stairs, the parapet of the temple court encloses the whole summit of the hill. Thence we looked forth with wonder far and wide over flat stubble-plains dotted with palms, ricks, villages, reservoirs and hills ; but since the reader cannot be expected to share our interest in that remote geography, let us turn our heads to the quaint little temple itself.

The outer wall of blackish stone, set on a platform under a colonnade, is carved all round with the story of Rama's epic in high relief ; lively, confident, clumsy sculpture, innocent as the work of a clever child of the glorious and graceful pedantry of the art-world of the age that gave it birth. Before the door of

the shrine stand the figures of the Reddi chiefs themselves, 'mixed with auxiliar gods,' for the gods are the smaller. The flagstones of the floor are carved with innumerable names and effigies of pilgrims, the effigies all very much alike; mere symbols, but some scratched lightly in outline, others veritable bas-reliefs, according to the fee paid. The temple is famous in these parts, and attracts thousands to its dusty car-festival in the spring, when the rural air is rent with the blowing of horns, and the clear water of the waning pool puddled with the multitude of bathers.

V

On the last night of my visit (it was Christmas eve, and brightly shone the moon), I witnessed, instead of carols, one of those choric dances, with which the villagers amuse themselves during the long nights, when there is no work to be done in the fields. At this season there was plenty to be done, and the dance was therefore not spontaneous, but a small performance given by special request. It began in front of the village grain-shop on the mud 'pial' or platform of which we sat; but on the floor of the dancing-place a heap of chillies had been spread all day to dry in the sun, and the dancers, after much sneezing, declared that the dust raised by their feet had contracted some of the quality of the chillies; they therefore removed to another place.

They danced with intricate and altering paces in a revolving ring, which sometimes broke into a spiral, or a moving maze,

singing lustily the while in answer to their dusky coryphæus, and marking the beat with wooden castanets. The songs mostly dealt with subjects drawn from the Hindu epics, and lingered especially about the episode, whose charm for the Hindu mind seems inexhaustible, where the demon carries off the wife of Rama in the wilderness. Others dealt with 'familiar matter of to-day,' as a pilgrimage of women to a neighbouring temple beside sea-blue Godavery. Most of the songs of the cowherds, which seem to fill the atmosphere at the hour of homing cattle, are strophes from such dancing-songs, the performance of which is an ancient pastime indeed, fulfilling for these simple hinds the office at once of church, theatre, and ballroom, like those Corinthean dithyrambs, in which was held to lie the origin of tragedy.

These particular dances, it seems, are more elaborate and artful than those originally afoot, and current in these parts. They were brought from the Delta some years ago by an individual, to whom the sum of fifteen rupees a month was paid by the village for teaching them to the youth. Even in rural India there is change and fashion, when you look close enough.

Were I to describe all the manners and customs, institutions and appliances, which I here had occasion to remark, and enlarge upon their philosophic suggestion, I should compile a very gazetteer. I must pass with a bare mention my visit to the Primary School, whereof the worthy pedagogue was proudly presented to me by my students as their first preceptor: no 'pial-school,' indeed, of the old type, where the books are pressed palmyra-leaves, and the sand of the floor supplies the

place of slates and blackboard (or it should detain us longer), but a 'recognised' school with desks and benches even; uncomfortable western properties, on which our Government quaintly insists as fundamental to learning. . . .

Then there was the library, an enterprise of the same students, being a bookcase (or, as we say, an almirah) well stocked with printed volumes in the vernacular, among which the Hindu epics again bulked big. Someone read me a passage from Ramayana in that lively plain-song, which for the Hindu is essential to the rendering of verse.

Very soon now the remote but familiar excitements of epic story were to pale for a time, as I have heard, beside the rumours and the news, as wonderful, as far-fetched, and often as fabulous, that should come daily out of the troublesome West. But only for a time, and hardly then to ruffle the surface of that long dream of the old age and Vergilian peace, which is reality itself in Seringapatnam.

O fortunatos nimium!

'O more than fortunate, if they only knew,
The husbandmen, what better wealth is theirs,
For whom ungrudgingly the righteous Earth,
Far from the crash of arms, apportioneth
From year to year their undistressful bread!'

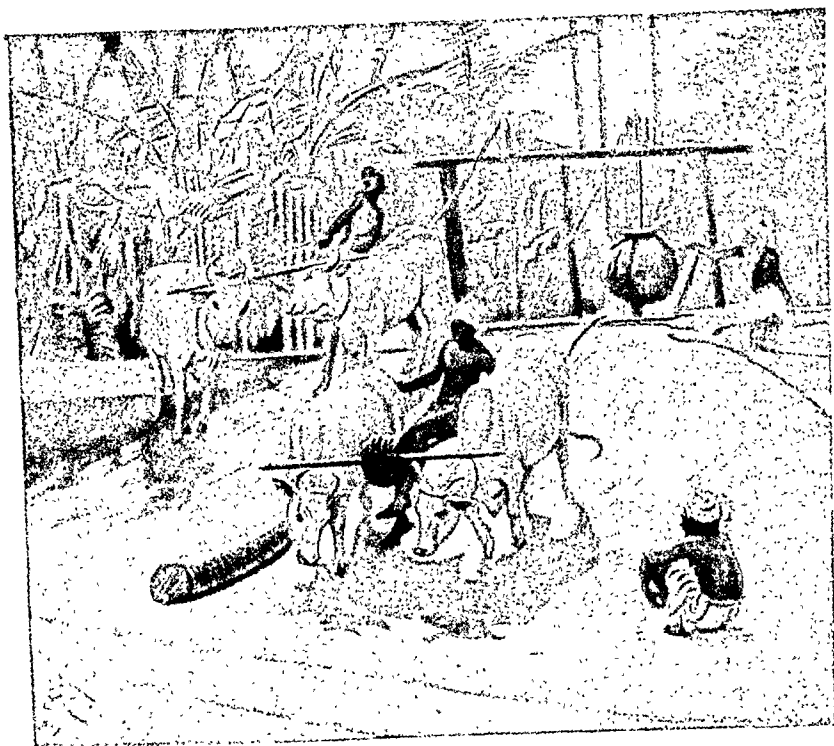
CHAPTER VIII

TROPIC SPRING

I

'THE winter here,' the inhabitants of Rajahmundry tell you when you first arrive 'is very severe.' As a matter of fact it is considerably hotter than most English summers ; but this is mainly due to the naked sunshine. Winds are sharp enough, at least by comparison with what is usual there, and the habits of the place, and conditions of clothing and shelter, to make the first mild intimations of increasing warmth, which awaken all the pastoral pipes at end of January, grateful even to a European settler.

If I were asked what season of the Indian year I found most genial and flattering to the animal spirits, I should name the month of February, and might even add a week of March ; for this new heat, though terrific in its meridian pride of place, is a clean dry heat, not like the clammy steam of September. But Nature never knows when to let well alone ; she is always marching from one extreme to another ; and those few February weeks of confident self-possession, when doubts and ailments disappear, and the whole pitch and keyboard of one's life seems



THE HEART OF THE GARDEN.

To face p. 122.

lifted ; when sensation, hope and memory are transfigured, and the passing moment achieves that authentic and immediate relish (undisruptive, however, of the steady joy of longer passages), which Coleridge demands of poetry ; these weeks pass all too soon, swallowed up in the enthusiasm of the oncoming summer.

The heat arrives in waves. Hardly has a man accommodated himself to the conditions established by the first, than the second overwhelms him. Work and pleasure alike are driven further and further from the centre of the day

‘ . . . Where now the mounted sun
Shoots down direct his fervid rays to warm
Earth’s inmost womb, more warmth than Adam needs ’

to take precarious refuge in the outskirts, and settle in the dwindling temperate zones of the morning and evening. But a resolute and adaptive person may still win much delight from the waxing season, fortified by the joyous aspect of nature, and infectious revelry of leaf and insect, bird and beast, who, like moths at a candle, seem unable to sate themselves with summer, until it scorches them to death. It is with mingled feelings that such a person retires, if his work allows him, before the torrid onslaught of May, and seeks refuge in the hills ; at once envying and pitying, and envied and despised by his less fortunate fellow labourers, left with a few spiritual consolations, and much prejudice to health, to bear the burden and heat of the year.

II

I have spoken of the joyousness of nature at this season ; but he that would conceive rightly of the austere and pallid loveliness of the tropic spring, must put aside many of the notions which are generally associated with natural beauty in other climes. In the first place, the spring is a season of high drought. No rain has fallen for months ; the grass shows straw-bright against the ruddy ground, like blond hair upon the temples of a northern gladiator tanned in Italian arenas. Green turf is only to be seen in dells where water was ; the brook upon the hill is turned to sand, a little river of sand complete with all its tributaries, bends, pools, cataracts, waves and eddies ; the cataracts locked, the waves motionless. Even the great bed of Godavery, that parti-coloured world of shoal and stream, begins, unlike the earth, to show to the sun more gold than blue, more land than water.

Now Europeans are accustomed to consider dewy freshness as essential to beauty in landscape ; drought they regard as abnormal, calamitous ; it takes them time to realise that this great parched phase of the Indian year is not only regular and healthy, but beautiful. I hope to be able to illustrate the point without sophistry. I speak of the beauty of dried grasses, of ripe ears of corn, of nuts and spices and pressed leaves preserved in books ; the safe, severe, pure, delicate beauty of death embalmed and unrepulsive. An added sense of convenience, which enables a man to make a bee-line where he will across reaped fields, without fear of let from bog or

stream, doubtless promotes, if it be not a part of æsthetic appreciation.

But it is chiefly after all as a foil that the Indian drought is precious; a foil and frame, firstly, to lush, watered gardens, and the few green crops that still remain; especially to the squares of the second rice-crop, and its intenser nurseries, perhaps the greenest thing that ever gave God praise out of the earth; and secondly to that which is everywhere a wonder, but here more wonderful surely than anywhere, I mean the coming of the young leaves.

For now among the jaded groves of this adust and arid land appear, as if by a miracle, the tender leaves of spring. A quiet wonder this, it may be; the fact has not been generally remarked by travellers; but I know nothing in Nature more apparently marvellous, few sights more strangely beautiful, than this unwatered outbreak of the Indian spring. For no rain has fallen since November, and yet the new leaves are as tender and fresh as the sprays of an English April; tenderer, the young leaves of the mango might well seem, that hang so tenuous and languid, and look as if they would melt in an hour of the fierce heat.

Many of the new leaves are of a rosy colour, like the curled fingers of young children; those that are green are green with a vividness (unless I am deceived by contrast and strong sunlight) not found elsewhere. This green of the spring breaks across the landscape like strange fire. The new leaves appear among the old, for spring and autumn are at work together. Indian trees do not, like ours, entirely strip themselves before

putting on their new attire ; the change is effected modestly, branch by branch, and piece by piece, as an Indian dame changes her garments at the river.

This is the characteristic, the unique mood of Indian landscape ; and thus, were I India's Turner (uncomfortable task !) would I paint her ; not in the dark-green luxury of the rainy season, not in the empty, fairy loveliness of the hills. These can be matched elsewhere, but not that austere and curious beauty which I am vainly endeavouring to suggest in words : the brilliant sunshine, the rainless blue, the clear and quivering air, the flaxen grass, the choking litter of dry leaves, the dwarf-Gothic spires and red earth castles of the ants, the brakes coated with red rust—I mean the dust of the red soil of the South ; and the sporadic train of the new green touching all that death-like and glittering pallor into life.

III

Birds, the splendid birds of the Peninsula, put on fresh plumage to match the trees. This is not the place to introduce a catalogue of South Indian birds ; but some of our winged splendours are so conspicuous and so common (commonness in fine things depreciates the individual, but enhances the value of the kind) that not to mention them would be to rob my picture of its truth.

There is the roller-bird or blue-jay, that diver from palmyratops, with wings like a great butterfly in sky-blue and ultramarine ; rocket-flighted parrots, whose plumage carries over



THE BANYAN.

into spring the softest verdure of the rains (gay green foresters they, that love to harry the corn-stacks) ; bee-eaters, glinting metallic beetle-wing blue-green and copper ; and yellow orioles, that chink their China bells (thus the note sounds) in the depths of the mango tree. The oriole is at once a beam of colour and a note of music. Other birds of spring there are, that live in the mind as voices only ; the tinkling copper-smith and universal crooning dove, the koil with his falling scale shrilled higher with each reiteration ; a cuckoo this, whom Indians praise as the prince of songsters, and feathered poet of the spring, but Europeans call him the brain-fever bird ! But I am beginning to trespass upon the preserves of that delightful aviarist, and Gilbert White of Anglo-India, Eha of Bombay.

The smaller mammals also, and especially those most nearly associated with leaves and birds, I mean the tree-lizards and chameleons and squirrels, in their appearance and behaviour display and constitute some of the liveliest symptoms of the spring. The former show themselves in greater number and variety than at any other season, and their scaly bodies blush and sparkle with new life. The squirrel, barred like a little civet, should perhaps have been introduced before. He is as much at home under eaves as leaves, and in India performs something of the office of a house-sparrow. He is always plentiful and frisky, but in the spring time his bird-like chirrup, and riotous-amorous play, are a nuisance and a scandal.

IV

The pains of spring must be far less tolerable for those not privileged, as I have been hitherto, to find refuge upon the motherly bosom of Godavery, or some such great water. They must be many, I fear, for the sacred rivers of the Peninsula generally run dry in summer, like that other ancient river, the River Kishon. I have said nothing of Godavery since October, when her change of colour signifies the end of the first phase, the phase of turbulence and flood. I must now give some account of her other and serener aspect, which lasts, with some diminution indeed, and sign of staleness towards the end, until the red water, like a barbarian invasion, invigorates her afresh at end of June.

When the flood subsides a number of shoals and sandy islands appear in the river. These gradually enlarge themselves as the year advances, until they occupy more of the great waterway than the water itself. Below the Anicut in particular there is early established a small annual Sahara, that reaches to the horizon, and produces its own mirages. But above the Anicut and head of the canals, the Godavery at this time has all the pomp and sweep and colour of an inland sea.

Throughout the dry season the water is uncommonly clear, with a faint green identity of its own ; but it turns the blue of the sky to as intense a stain as the bluest Mediterranean. Were I to write an epic on Godavery (and indeed she might furnish materials for many little *Odyssey's*) would make 'sea-blue Godavery' my 'constant epithet'; meaning thereby, not

only that opaque intenser turquoise, which is her characteristic hue at certain hours and angles, but all those innumerable modes of blueness, and qualifications of purple and green and grey, which Godavery shares with authentic Neptune, and which entitle her also to the occasional use of those other ceremonial epithets of his, the 'mist-like' say, or the 'wine-faced.'

Magnificent indeed is the view of the great river as seen from the town Bund on a March forenoon. The great blue floor of waves is spread as far as the edge of the southern sky, where it is cut off by the Anicut, five miles away, as clean as any sea-horizon; and crowning that horizon, like the four heads of some Puranic deity, rise the wooded promontories and islands, of which, as of giant stepping-stones, the builders of the Anicut availed themselves. The splendid estuary (such is the appearance of the river at this point) is winged with sails; for at this hour of the day the navies of the Delta troop across from Bobbarlanka, the lock at the far end of the Anicut, which feeds the canals of fertile Amalapur. The boats carry one Homeric lugsail each. Like winged hopes they first appear, then change into rugged and picturesque realities, their sails full of holes, their hulks labouring with bales of rice, chillies, cocoanuts, and those delicious Delta sugar-plantains. A stiff breeze fattens the sails, which but for rifts would show like marble in the sunlight.

Later in the day this upstream wind will perhaps raise billows 'dangerous to less than' sea-boats; at which time a sail in a country craft is a diversion as lively as yachting. As

our time is limited let us rather sit upon the shore, and listen in the twilight to the vast rustle of the river in such a wind. One may perceive in it a kind of auricular perspective ; through the deep sob and heavy slap of the near waves one catches the more numerous ripple of the middle distance, itself emerging from the infinite slurred whisper of the watery leagues beyond.

But in this vasty region of waves and sand, of islands, friths, and shallows uncharted and shifting from year to year, the account is like to lose its way ; and unless we proceed with greater circumspection, find itself aground, or locked in a blind alley. Indeed, when I consider the extent and variety of the subject on which we have embarked, and the peculiarities of the crazy scallop-shell, Description, in which we have perforce to navigate—swift enough, certainly, and able to sail in the very eye of the wind, but frail, unstable and mischievously apt, unless she be tactfully handled, as if by magic to charm the passenger asleep and spill him overboard ; when I consider these difficulties I am at a loss to know which way to steer.

Shall we make for the long low sandbank yonder, that seems indeed the further shore, but when we reach it will prove to be removed therefrom by a mile of shallows, pools and sands ? Here are palm-leaf shelters of the fishermen, and nets hung round. It is morning. We see mud-pots, and breakfast cooking. Somewhat apart is a boat full of last night's haul, roach-like fish and smaller fry, with crawling crayfish. The boat belongs to the most considerable type of indigenous Godavery builds ; for the larger cargo and passenger boats, despite their Odyssean appearance, are said to be of English design, and no older than

the Anicut ; but this is called *nawa* from of old, as who should say, *navem, nawn*. Its most curious feature is a little beak at either end, slightly classic in suggestion, and generally painted vermilion, as the rest of the slender hull with tar ; whether with any reference to Homer's 'black ships,' and 'vermilion prows,' I know not, but like to think so.

The sand of these vast shoals is not uniform in colour and surface, nor otherwise uneventful. Its varieties of hard and soft, fineness and grit, its contours, its weedy wreathes 'not oozy,' its flotsam and jetsam, its epigraphy of birds' foot-prints, are a study in themselves. Here the river, ebbing by degrees, has engraved the edge of a sandy sill with grooves, like the mouldings upon the stylobate of some fallen palace in the desert ; there, careering over shallows in full flood, it has stamped whole acres, long since high and dry, with the impress of its waves, like the sculptured image of a stormy sea ; which the winds, elsewhere fretting the soft sand into dainty ripples far and wide, might seem vainly endeavouring to imitate. Here, drifted upon a beach, is a little wrecked ark of reed and wicker, the repository once of the hopes and offerings of some anxious worshipper ; a few bleached paper favours still cling to the hoops of the canopy, and the timbers of its little raft are still complete ; but the oil has long since run out of the lamp (which is made out of a plantain-leaf), and gods or men or birds have helped themselves to the fruit-offering of plantains. The moist sand all about is printed close with the feet of birds, a Babylonish or Nephelococcygian text, wherein certain pronged capitals, astonishingly large, predominate.

The birds of Godavery, the ducks, coots, kingfishers and innumerable small fry, the herons large and small, the cranes and pelicans, would require a volume to themselves. To the voyager with a good pair of glasses they are an inexhaustible object of interest, but they mainly live in the memory, even as they first reveal themselves, in the form, if form it may be called, of voices only ; voices on the sandbars of the river, and a crying as of children, like the souls of unburied children calling to one another across the Stygian flats.

Our scallop-shell seems to have run aground, a not uncommon experience of Godavery voyagers in the spring, else we would have been by this time within sight of the tiara-tower of the Pattisam temple, which stands, a noble sea-mark, upon a sand-steeped rock in the middle of the water-way, sixteen miles above Rajahmundry ; stands and looks across a league of sand toward that other sacred islet, similarly crowned, that guards the exit of the river from the mountains.

On a day in March there is held a great bathing festival at Pattisam, to which the people of the country round come in their thousands. Years ago I remember setting forth with a party to see this festival. We started overnight, but fell among shoals, and did not reach our destination until sunset, when most of the fair's fun was over. As we drew near across the sand the noise of the festival was like the noise of frogs in a September pond—a great throbbing murmur of voices, drums and horns, and a beat of gongs like the bell of the bull-frogs. But what we found in the twilight was but the ghost of a crowd, and relics of a festival ; stripped stalls, and burnt-out fires.

I visited Pattisam lately in its normal solitude. In the sunlight of a March noon we climbed to the little temple-court ; we were surprised to find how little it was, this temple that dominates the river for miles. There was good ancient stone-work upon the basement, and here and there a piece of sculpture, a balustrade, for instance, of heraldic swans, which commemorated a more majestic tradition than has obtained in these parts for centuries. In the absence of the priests, who were probably celebrating their siesta, we explored every nook of the precinct. Behind a stone image in a side-chapel we found pieces of a brazen panoply, made to fit the person of the goddess, even the face and hands, like a glove, or should we say a gauntlet. In these we cased her, like children putting together a puzzle, and made a stone idol into a brazen.

On this occasion we sailed past the second island-temple (which we visited) into the lilac heart of the hills, whose uncouth shapes, bristling with forest strangely discoloured by the fierce young summer, seemed at noon, when the blue of the river is deepest and opaquest, like the four beasts and the four and twenty elders sitting round the jasper sea. We moored at the entrance of that tremendous defile, where the river, scarce two hundred yards across, walks through the central ridge of the Eastern Ghauts. On the night of our arrival the air was thick with the smoke of forest fires, which scored the flanks of the mountain opposite, as if an illumination had been arranged to welcome us ; at break of day the fires still smouldered, like persevering revellers, and in fact throughout our stay such conflagrations continued to crackle, fume

and flare upon the slopes of the surrounding hills. What, think you, is the colour of a great flame in the full sunlight of an Indian April? It exactly resembles the scarlet of the tree-blossom known as flame-of-the-forest.

We explored the gorge in a country dug-out. Of the rocks we saw, and the beasts we heard, and the forest paths we traced, and the labours we endured, both here and in the course of our journey; and of the bathes with which, in spite of crocodiles, we salved those labours, and of the songs we sang, and the strange speech we had, not only with the dwellers in the villages upon the banks, but with such as have their home for months on those immense rafts of timber and bamboo, which make their almost imperceptible and stream-slow progress from the hills as far as Rajahmundry—to tell of these in greater detail, were as interminable as that progress of the rafts. Of my companions, Indian lads, one was a poet, and another a painter; and assuredly we returned with a stronger sense of the beauty and wonder of the world, and of our Indian world in particular, than we set forth withal.

v

We arrived home just in time for Sri-Rama-Navami, which happens to be the great festival of the year at Rajahmundry. They make much of it also at Bhadrachalam, a place of pilgrimage beyond the gorges, and we met upon the river many a boatload of pilgrims, who made the glens re-echo with their pious shouts and human laughter. I cannot hope to describe

in detail all the street festivals, bathing festivals, and car festivals that decorate 'like captain jewels in the carcanet,' the Indian year, and especially the springtime. We have caught a bare glimpse of a bathing festival (*tirtham*), such as occurs at several places along the river at this season. There is always the same parti-coloured and bedraggled crowd peopling the desert sand, and stabbing the water into mire; the same army of mummers, mountebanks, musicians, fortune-tellers, pardoners, priests, beggars, with all their flummery and frippery, half-religious, half-histrionic, their peacock-feathers, and fantastic rags, and painted faces, their gongs and conches, charms and spells, their sacred bulls, and performing rams, their psalms and music, their dances, and enthusiasm; the same processions to the river, bearing canopies above reed-and-paper arks, and other flimsy pageants, before which the minstrels' drums and pipes, true Indian ware, make no such fashionable-brazen dissonance, and nightmare memory of the Salvation Army, as the foolish pride of the town prefers.

Of car festivals, I have mentioned Korukonda; but there is a similar and more easily accessible ceremony which takes place in February at Dowlaishwaram; some notice of which, with a glance at the Rajahmundry streets on a night in Sri-Rama-Navami, may well conclude our account of the subject.

VI

The Dowlaishwaram temple, set on a promontory of the

river, has been already mentioned. It has no beauty of its own, but commands a lovely panorama ; a sight of which I once achieved with much obstinacy and bickering, for the miserable priests declared that even the flight of steps that scale the hill are polluted by the feet of a European. At the foot of the steps is the shed of the car, a curious upright building. All considerable gods maintain such cars, which were conceived, perhaps, as war-chariots, but are now only used once a year for carriage exercise. The Dowlaishwaram deity, for instance, is dragged through the streets as far as the Lutheran Church, where he sits awhile, and is then dragged back again. What exchange of civilities takes place in the interval is not recorded by the fabulists of either creed.

This particular car, like all the properties of the northern temples, is but a tawdry toy beside the majestic and gloriously carven cars of the south, which we shall see later at their moorings ; of their function we must conceive from the present narrative. Ours has several storeys, with rails and neatly turned balustrades, almost its only permanent ornament, except red and blue paint, and the god's wooden charioteer and horses, carved and painted in a style considerably worse than that employed on the best English roundabouts. The poverty of ornament, however, is tastefully hidden for the occasion with branches of palm, and whole plantain-trees with waving fronds, and paper flags and lanterns. High upon the topmost roof, symbol of sovereignty (this kind of thing, I protest, we shall not see in the south) is a Paris umbrella.

The great clamped wooden wheels have been duly examined

and certified safe by the Public Works Department ; the police have made the necessary traffic regulations, and the car is now ready to start. Hanuman and Garuda, the monkey-god and the hawk-god, huge wicker frames with wooden heads and a man inside, have for some time been waltzing about among the crowd, as if to clear the way. A motley company, half hireling, half enthusiast, already strains at the cables ; others with sticks run up and down and shout directions ; others wait by the wheels with blocks and levers. Within the car, besides the god himself, or his travelling image, is a crew of priests, and servants of the temple ; their situation, as will be seen, is not without its trials.

At last, rocking and creaking, the ungainly pageant suddenly lurches forward. At once the air is thick with flying plantain-fruits, which the devout (and others) try to throw into the car. If their plantain lodges in the car, it brings good luck. I lodged some three myself last year. The fusillade of fruits is as hot and lively, swift and far, as the flight of snowballs in a match of English schoolboys. Many strike the frame and fall away, but many stick, and the lower storey is soon ankle-deep in plantains. The crew of the car shelter themselves as best they can against the fruitful blizzard. Sometimes a protesting angry face appears, only to receive an aggravation of its wrong.

The car travels in jerks, thirty yards at a time, with so many stoppages to adjust the wheels, and breathe the team, that it takes two hours to cover its allotted course of half a mile. So long as the car is in motion, the hail of plantains does not cease. The crowd surges about the car, and many bowing themselves

almost under the wheels, and beaten back with difficulty by the staves of the officials, might seem to be striving to immolate themselves, as before another Juggernaut; but their real motive (I wonder if this was the case at Puri) is to pick up plantains.

The other attractions of the feast, the merry crowds, the dancers in a ring, the paper toys and glistening stalls, are merely free translations into Telugu of the terms of an English village festival. Perhaps for that very reason one likes to go there once a year, to *shy* at the car, and buy a fairing.

VII

Sri-Rama-Navami at Rajahmundry is mainly a night festival. Rich merchants cause to be made, with pictures and images and much tinsel, certain temporary shrines to Rama, at which the crowd is allowed to gape. They also erect spacious tabernacles in the street, and hire dancing girls to dance therein, and professional reciters to declaim the story of the Incarnate God. I do not propose to dilate upon these performances. The dancing girls go awhoring after frilled sleeves, the reciter is too often damned at the outset, in the eyes of purists like ourselves, by a cockney-English forelock. But I discovered this year for the first time a kind of entertainment, to which I have often heard my young Indian friends refer, in the course of those fascinating reminiscences of their childhood in the villages, into which I sometimes betray them; an entertainment which seemed to me at the same time so artistic, so unique, and

so obviously old, so redolent of the vast nocturnal vacancies of immemorial Asia, that I cannot refrain from trying to tell the world about it.

It was called *Toku Bonmalu*, the Skin Pictures, and was something between a Punch-and-Judy show and a magic lantern ; or shall I call it, not prehistoric, for it was far too highly civilised, but an antediluvian cinematograph ? A sheet is hung before a booth, or across the end of an alley, with a row of lamps behind it ; and upon this luminous tract are seen, motionless as yet, and exercising the simple wonder and impatient curiosity of the audience, the fantastic shapes of the characters destined to appear in the scene that is to follow. It is probably an episode in the immortal story of Rama and the war in Lanka. There is the hero himself, known by his dark blue colour and pointed nose, and the mark of the god Vishnu, of whom he is an Avatar, printed about his person like a mystical broad arrow. There is his brother Lakshmana, a smaller copy of him in red, and their monstrous following of bear-men and monkey-men, led by the versatile Hanuman, a kind of Caliban-Ariel, at once the merry-Andrew and irresistible Talus of the story. Or we see the demon Ravana, king of Lanka, with his ten heads, his round red wife, and his fellowship of ogres.

The figures are cut with jointed limbs out of coloured hide, and stretched upon a light frame. They are grotesque, but not so rude, upon a close inspection, as may appear at first. The art, of which they are the offspring, has its own crude conventions, like the huge circular eyes, black in white, of all the cast, and the enormous nose-rings of the ladies. But it is visibly allied,

and ennobled in its resemblance, to the old hieratic schools of South Indian painting, such as people with heraldic deities the painted cloths of Kumbakonam and Conjeeveram. In this style the figures of the shadow-play are highly finished, with much elaboration of ornament, even to piercing thematerial with a dainty filigree of rosettes and asterisks, to represent the pattern of the costume. The colours, when thrown upon the screen, are marvellously rich and luminous ; the prevailing tone, and usual complexion of the persons, being a splendid scarlet.

But what struck me most, as soon as the figures began to move, was the wonderful range of expression which the manipulator behind the sheet achieved with these simple means and quaint symbols. What varieties, what subtleties almost of emotion did he manage to suggest by the mere tilt of the figure, or the raising of an arm ! Arrogance and supplication, fright and rage, kingly condescension and pure animal spirits, were equally well rendered. Of course the showmen took full advantage of that gesture-language, hand-language one might almost call it, which the Indians reduce to such a nicety. The hand alone, I noticed, had more than one kink for the rod of the manipulator, and the lifting or depression of the wrist or palm said volumes.

During the whole time that I was present, the apparition of Rama spoke without movement, save of the directing arm, and eloquent right hand ; and the effects of aloofness and heroic dignity secured by this simple device was astonishing. But Ravana, the crimson giant, shook with rage until his ten heads looked like fifteen ; and Hanuman, the monkey auxiliary,

performed incredible antics. There were many clever methods of suggesting miracle and mystery, and where these failed, a bold convention stepped into the breach. The great blue Rama remained fixed upon the screen, whether he had any part to play in the passing scene or no, as if to suggest the pervading disposition of the man-god. How much finer and truer this, than the petty realism that would correct it ! But the edges of the demons became sharp or blurred as occasion required ; they vanished like smoke, and appeared upon a clap of drum-thunder.

It was ludicrous enough, but as the night wore on (for I could have watched that sheet for hours) one's sense of the ludicrous was lulled, and one felt the serious enchantment which held the simple audience spell-bound again in the mazes of that wonderful story. The sweet and slender old-world music also (for this shadow-play was but the accompaniment to yet another recitation of the immortal epic), made a part of that solemnity.

Long after midnight I went behind the screen to see the showmen and the choir. They were two men and three women, one of whom sang with her sleeping baby at her shoulder. The man, whose duty it was for the time being to hold the directing rods, was clearly inflamed with the authentic fire ; he worked with eager eyes, and a concentrated energy well calculated to galvanise his puppets into life. These people were all of a family, the wife and children of one man, who was also the maker, they told me, of the skin pictures ; in fact, the father of the show. The patriarch was then asleep, but his effects were

at work. I gave them money and went back to the audience, and received a shock when the minister of the court of Lanka, a waggish little character, pitch-polled across the scene with the announcement that the kind gentleman had given them two rupees.*

They tell me that the music of the recitations—which to me seemed so much pleasanter than the whining Parsee music of the new Andhra Theatre—is as crude and silly as the art of the pictures. Well, I would rather look at these than at most of the new drop-curtains from Bombay. They say too that the skin-pictures are going out of favour, with everything else that is old and beautiful. For I call them beautiful, though they are so quaint.

Were the 'magic shadow-shapes' which Omar saw, and which suggested to him dark, transcendental things—were they at all like these, I wonder?

* Because they were poor people I gave them two rupees. At the same festival, I remember, desiring to follow the custom, I gave six rupees to a fashionable dancing-girl, gorgeous in silk and gold, because she would have turned up her nose at less. Luckily Ramudu reproved me for this. His family politics were modernist, and inimical to dancing-girls; but I felt the fitness of his reproach, and sent the shadow-players a better present as conscience-money!

PART II
THE TEMPLES OF THE SOUTH

CHAPTER IX

THE TEMPLES OF THE SOUTH

I HAVE said that religion can best be studied in the Tamil country, and of this portion of my subject I propose now to treat. In Telingana, as indeed throughout the whole of India further north, the Hindu temples in use are seldom either very large, very old, or very beautiful. Derelict shrines there are indeed outside the Tamil country more beautiful than anything that Tamil art can shew. Such are the temples of the Gadag neighbourhood in Canara, the Kailās at Elbora, the temple-cities of Bhuvaneswar and Khujarahō toward the north; among which the Kailās and the great temple of Bhuvaneswar (the latter still a populous place of worship), are comparable even in size to the Tamil temples, though the usual ideal of Indian architects of the great period (eighth to tenth century) was a cluster of exquisite chapels rather than the one cathedral pile and precinct beloved by the mediæval Tamils. The artistic supremacy of the great period must be admitted, but its temples are mostly now forsaken, ruinous and rare. I write here only of the homes of living worship.

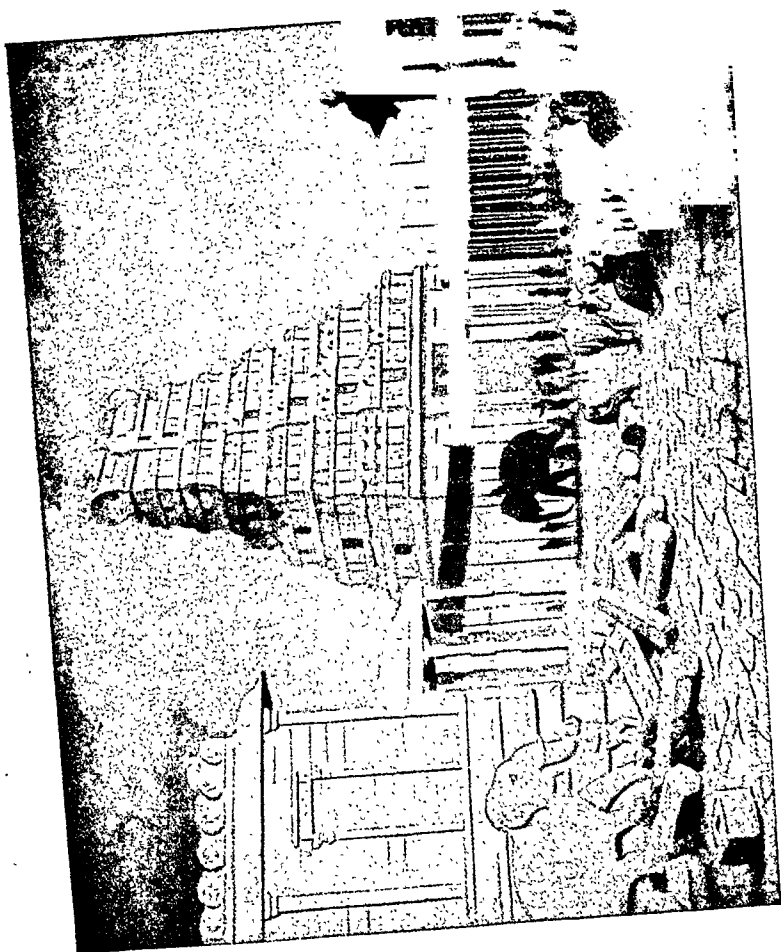
The country south of Madras is planted thick with cities,

before whose pontifical and crowded piles the temples of Benares, if they could be set, would look mean and tawdry. This is because in the north all public expression of Hinduism has for centuries been made only on Muslim sufferance, grudgingly extended and often savagely revoked, whereas in the Tamil country powerful and wealthy Hindu governments flourished until comparatively recent years, and graved in stone the traditions of the national faith and art on a scale worthy of independent royalty.*

Conjeeveram, Chidambaram, Tanjore, Trichonopoly, Srirangam, Madura, Rameswaram; all these at one time or another I have seen; they are but some of the temple-cities of the South. To describe them each in detail, as this is not a guide-book nor an architectural treatise, would be untimely as well as tedious. But I would willingly convey, if words can do it, some general notion of the charm of these places, gathering and weaving together memories of happy hours.

As for the Tamil country itself, the Dravida-dēsha, where the scene of these recollections is laid, it differs but little in general character from the region further north, the habitation of a kindred people, with which the reader has already been

* The South Indian imperial city of Vijayahagar, on the Tungabhadra, was destroyed by the Muhammadans in 1563; but Muhammadan power was not asserted in the Tamil country until the invasion of Aurungzeb (1700), and was never oppressive, as the nawabs thereafter went in fear of the Hindu power of the Marathas, which had arisen in their rear. A Maratha dynasty ruled in Tanjore until it was annexed by the British in 1800. Hindu dynasties still rule in Canarese Mysore (the government of which was usurped from 1760 to 1799 by Muhammadan adventurers, Hyder Ali and his son Tipoo), and in Cochin and Travancore in the far south-west.



EVENING AT CHIDABARAM.

made acquainted. Nature wears generally the same aspect, man's art and thought, the noble and the mean alike, were learned in the same school. Obvious differences there are, no doubt. One misses altogether the black soil so common in Telingana and Canara, while the red earth which is only an occasional feature, like a rubric of the former, and almost wanting in the latter, is here the usual keynote of the landscape; and a curiously cheerful undertone it makes, in spite of the fiercer heats and sunlights of the further South.

The tremendous Indian summer, though hardly hotter, comes earlier and broods longer here than elsewhere, and what is courteously known as the cool weather lacks that kindly matutinal crispness which the Telingas find 'severe.' Moreover this brief and merely relative winter is partly blurred with rain, for the Tamil husbandmen wait upon the North-east monsoon, which blows in October and November, instead of the earlier South-west, which for some reason brings them only cloud and a certain grateful coolness.

In the higher phases of the creation like changes catch the eye as we leave the northern people for the southern. Here pottery, like the parent earth, is differently fired, and in strange sympathy likewise becomes red instead of black. The oxen of Telingana, including the famous Nellore breed, have shortish horns, but those of the further South are one and all crowned as it were with a great stringless lyre of ivory, which lends a silent note of majesty to the traffic of the streets and wharves of metropolitan Madras. Likewise upon the brows of men castemarks, the seals of the national gods, are commoner and

larger, and commoner and more conspicuous also are the many forms of that contrarious Hindu tonsure, which leaves a long horse-tail of hair just where the European monk wears nothing.

These human fashions mean a greater steadfastness in the old and purely Indian order than the Telingas, in the towns at least, have been able to preserve. Not that the Tamil people are backward; rather they know better than their northern neighbours how to lay hold on the new without relinquishing the old. There is no need for an Andhra man to go to the Tamil country to study the Tamils. The latter visit him at home, and get employment in his offices and schools, faster than he can find room for them in his heart.

For the Tamil Brahmins are a remarkable race, clever and full of enterprise. For all their stricter orthodoxy they adopted Western education earlier, and still ensue it more industriously, than the more easy-going men of Andhra-desha. Therefore are they sometimes called by lovers of analogy the Scots of Southern India; but the comparison, though illustrating well enough the point in question, should not be further pressed. It is perhaps chiefly the fear of Tamil penetration which has led the Andhras to agitate for a separate administration.

The Tamil Brahmins shave clean, unlike their Andhra brothers, who largely affect a Maratha-military moustache which hardly fits one's notion of a Brahmin. True, it is the mark only of the Niyogi, the Brahmin who has renounced the service of religion for professional work in the world; but in the Tamil country even such retain the mask of ancestral holiness. Nothing impressed me more, on first arriving in

South India, than the faces of these Tamil Brahmins. They reminded me of a Roman portrait-gallery, where the features of unknown sages, poets and statesmen are assembled, and sometimes the face occurs of a Greek god grown thoughtful ; all are chiselled in the same clear medium, but here it is darker than old marble, and liker walnut-wood or a very ancient ivory.

The difference is greater in the South between the higher and the lower castes than in Telingana. The common people of the South are far inferior to those of Telingana in refinement of feature, but the Brahmins of the South, Aiyars and Aiyangars, are at no such disadvantage beside their northern brother. Feminine beauty in these latitudes is generally held to shine brightest among the Tamil Aiyangars, the Vaishnava Brahmins of Coromandel. *

The southern ladies deserve also this praise, that they still remain staunch to the noble silken flow of their ancestral costume, and robes darkly rich with Indian dyes, having among them nothing sewn but the short close bodice ; a costume which has not its equal in the world to-day for dignity and beauty. But the daughters of the Andhras, those at least who pretend to wealth and station, are beginning to coquette with the barbaric fashions of the West, and interpolate half-sleeves, puffed and frilled, into such weeds as might have beseeemed the mother of the Gracchi.

Altogether the Tamils have a far weightier and more

* I think the Aiyungars must have come largely from Gujerat, a little more than 1,000 years ago, for Gujerat was a centre of the Bhagavatas, the original Vaishnavas. Gujerati women are likewise famous for their beauty.

comfortable body of ancestral culture behind them than the people of the Cirkars. I shall never forget how disgusted I was when, having lately left Tanjore, where they still entertain one with a dance of damsels (unless vulgarity and puritanism have swept them away since 1909), I was asked, by a prominent citizen of an Andhra city of old renown, to an entertainment of which a card-conjuror and a gramophone were to be respectively the life and soul. Fortunately this was an extreme instance, but the suggested contrast was typical enough. Some are even said to consider the substitution of the gramophone for the dancing-girl as a sign of advancing civilisation, because the dancing-girls too often sing sweet love songs over-boldly, or are otherwise no better than they should be.

But the Tamil people excels in every art, in the weaving of soft raiment as well as of alluring gestures, in the graving of brass, the carving of wood, the working of stone, in fact in the devising of all those embellishments which make the life of a people happier for themselves, and more interesting to others. Such embellishments in a simpler form are still a part of popular life even in Telingana, but for centuries the country has not been rich enough to develop them, and its later prosperity turns away from them to foreign gewgaws. The new spirit of nationalism, I fear, has come too late to help them.

CHAPTER X

TIRUKALIKUNDRAM

THE name means the Village of the Sacred Kite. Outside Wales you will rarely find names as long as those of Tamil villages. I did not seek out Tirukalikundram ; it may almost be said to have accosted me. I was on my way to the Seven Pagodas, a desolate group of monuments upon the seashore not far south of Madras, when I came amost unexpectedly upon this remote and amiable haunt of ancient piety ; less ancient, indeed, and less remote, than the ruins of which I was in search, but lovelier, because it was alive.

I left the railway at Chingleput in the afternoon. A yellowing diary reminds me (for this was several years ago) that the hood of the cart shut out too much of the pretty rural road, the landscape of bushy hills, the collonade of cocoanut-palms that wound through rice-fields.

At 5 we came to Tirukalikundram, where were ramparts and a temple-tower crowning a rocky hill, and at the foot of it a temple and precinct almost of cathedral size, with several great gateheads or gopurams. A quiet spot, where old-world Hinduism flourished unspoiled. In the street outside the eastern

pagoda-gate stood two enormous processional cars, each roofed for the nonce with a great cone of thatch like an extinguisher, which rose far above the roofs around. I stooped beneath the eaves, and found the whole body of the great wains carved most curiously over with ramping lions and prancing cataphracts, lotus-bells and rails and bosses ; profuse, bewildering ornament, but worm-eaten now. I walked down the village street, looking up at the rock shrine aglow in the last sunlight, and presently came to a large tank,' or pool as Anglo-Indians would call it, if they prized as they ought the rare virtue of Bible words to call up Indian images in English minds. This pool ' was enclosed completely in a stone frame of bathing-stairs, with a little portico at each corner (such as we call a *mandapam*) and perhaps another in the middle. Tawny Brahmins bathed and prayed in the emerald water.'

The car, the gopuram, the stone-surrounded pool—such sights, familiar to me once, are rare nowadays in the north, at least on such a scale of sumptuous and venerable beauty. A great desire and memory came over me of that old world of southern Hinduism, which I had once held cheaply enough.* ' I crept into my cart with regret, and was jolted away over a void plain, while the day died in the west and a tender moon prevailed ; until we won through sand to a wide and shallow water, beyond which hung rocks and a lighthouse and a far whisper of waves. Haystacks floated in a barge at the water's edge. . . . '

* The author's first months of exile (March and April, 1909), were spent in the Tanjore country, the heart of the Tamil country and culture.

So I passed on to the seashore and the further past, resolved, however, that I would not return to our distressful century, without breaking the journey at the Village of the Sacred Kite. I spent some days at the Seven Pagodas, whereof here needs no account, though I may be tempted to write one later, when I have longer studied the riddle of these and other sphinxes of the rock, and extinct oracles of ancient India.*

Early one morning I started to return toward Tirukalikundram, the tower of whose rock-shrine was minutely visible, a spur upon the ridge that ended the western plain. The sun was high but not too hot when we reached the village, and proceeded to visit the larger temple, which stood among the houses on the level ground. One of the temple trustees, a dark and portly Sudra, conducted me round the outer court. He spoke English, and was the chairman of some local board, but now went naked to the waist in the honest rural fashion, and forbore to spoil the picture, for which I thanked him silently.

This lower temple was a typical Dravidian fane, and almost of the first class in size. A short account of it will provide the reader with an idea, by means of which he may interpret and assort what is said piecemeal below about the more difficult labyrinths of Chidambram and Madura. I shall try to do for the reader the office, which the chairman did for me, though his task was easier, for his words had not, like mine, to furnish his charge with eyes, as well as information.

The temple before us consists of several spacious courts,

* See Chapter XVI.

one within the other ; how many, we shall not know until we climb the rock-stair to the other shrine, for here we are not allowed to go beyond the outer enclosure, the court of the Gentiles. This is unfortunate, but not so much as might at first appear ; for the architectural grandeur and curiosity of a Dravidian temple appear most bravely in the outer courts, and approach in diminishing scale, and as it were with a progressive abasement, the solemn darkness of the shrine. The outer court is itself as large as a village, and surrounded by a wall as high as a rampart ; in which capacity no doubt it sometimes served, for many of the famous pagodas of the south have stood a siege almost within the century, and find mention in Orme's military history. The court is a perfect square, and full in the centre of each face the gateway towers, or gopurams, lift up their everlasting heads.

They are not all of equal size, but all noble, and might seem akin, so huge they are and strange, to the tower of Babel. I wish there were a current English word that would at once convey the figure of a gopuram ; for it is one of the types and master-notions of architectural geography, the symbol of a civilisation, like the Greek peristyle, the Gothic nave, the Moorish arch, and the dragon roofs of China. The language of John Company, which has often in such matters the right measure of currency and precision, is here too vague for us ; they called the pile a ' pagod ' or pagoda, which meant, however, one thing in Madras, another in Ceylon, something else in Burmah, and a very different building in Japan.

The Sanskrit word ' gopuram ' literally means a cow-gate,

and remembers the village origin of the Indian temple-plan. A gate the thing no doubt fundamentally is ; tall and broad, with majestically moulded jambs ; but over the gate rises a structure like the mitre of Melchizedek writ large in chiselled brickwork, or as it were the poop of some super-quinquireme of the island genii sailing the blue deep of air, its many-windowed storeys diminishing upward as if with distance, and the horned masks of Australasian chimæras hung from the far off gables of the roof. The gateheads before us are comparatively plain, and show the original structure of the pile as a pyramid of little ornamental shrines ; others, later work, we shall elsewhere see crusted with idols. The figure of the gopuram is repeated on a smaller scale at the entrance to the second enclosure, over the high wall of which appears the crest of at least another smaller yet. The central tower itself is hardly visible at all above the surrounding cloisters.

Western architects blame this disposition of the towers, as offending the law of unity ; and indeed the practice of an earlier age was otherwise even here ; the great tenth-century temple of Tanjore is dominated by its central tower. The truth of the criticism one may admit, but hardly feel upon the spot ; why, we cannot here wait to enquire. Perhaps there is right in the contention that material grandeur is best shown upon the outworks, where the sanctuary confronts a boastful world. ' And first we came to a tower, whereof the storeyed pavilions reached the sky,' so, with Oriental rhetoric, might some pilgrim villager narrate, ' but the Lord was not in the tower ; and afterwards to a lesser tower, whereof the front was covered

with the images of God, but the Lord was not among the images ; and last of all to an empty and dark cell. . . .'

The Tirukalikundram temple wants the stone-flagged sacred pool which often adorns the outer court of the large Dravidian temples. The place, however, boasts an especially fine mandap, a kind of detached portico used by the god, I believe, on the occasion of his annual marriage. It consists of a roof supported by a dark regiment of enormous monoliths, carved bracketwise in the figure of riders upon prancing steeds, and ramping lions, and monstrous fowls, doomed to carry the great eaves, sagging now, with static agony, like the persons of an epic hell. There were other and newer porches in the court, which I did not observe closely, partly because they seemed to be of an ordinary character, and partly out of modesty ; for I fancied, from some hurry of the chairman as we passed them, that certain of the sculptures may have been what we should call improper. . . .

The chairman now appointed a man to conduct me up the stairs to the rock-temple. Of its architecture, however, as afterwards appeared, one could judge better from the street. Its main feature was a tower of the same pontifical order as the gateheads, but of the square and central shape, dome-crowned, which usually marks an actual shrine, and is called vimana. Far-seen from below, it was not easily visible from the platform of the rock-temple itself. But the high shrine had other wonders of its own.

The ascent was not so arduous as I had expected, for brakes and branches of the hillside pleasantly dappled the stone stairs. I made friends with three curious and idle schoolboys, who were

following me up. Pretty embryos of that odd amphibious kind, the English-educated Brahmin, they put me in mind of my own scholars ; yet being in their simple country half-dress a piece of the old-world scene, and evidently free of the rock and the rock-shrine from their infancy, they made a welcome link between the place and me.

At the top of the steps a number of priests, naked to the waist (like everyone else in Kalikundram except myself), and wearing between their brows the painted prongs of the Vaishnava caste-mark, lounged about the door of a gloomy cell. Several of these at once asked my young companions in Tamil, ' Who opened the cook-house door ? ' To which the boys replied with the same ready unanimity, ' Aiyangar.' The question was translated, but any hope of my discovering *why* Aiyangar should have been guilty of such an act (which sounded worthy of the hero of a nursery rhyme), or otherwise improving the glimpse into the life of the place, which the brief dialogue so vaguely promised, was baffled by the imperfection of the boys' English, and quickly dissipated by the appearance at the rampart's edge of a magnificent panorama.

We could see beneath us the great concentric squares of the other temple in steep perspective, like a Chinese picture, or like a novel chess-board, whereof the costly pieces were the greater and the lesser towers, the tall main gateheads being the kings and queens. We could see the plan of the village, with the stone-faced pool, and other tanks beside. Without in the fields were larger reservoirs, and the roads to Sadras and Chingleput studded with trees like buttons at a seam. The

priests brought out a complimentary chain of yellow flowers, and some rose-leaves in a brass dish. I peered into the pitch-dark sanctuary, but the priests warned me not to enter. The service in which I took part was conducted entirely in the open air, and consisted of the collection only.

We descended by another stair, and came to the platform where in Memphian fashion they daily feed certain kites, the mascots of the sanctuary. From hence we beheld the other hemisphere of the rock's outlook, to the whole eastward length of whose wide floor the sea, four miles away, made a pale and glittering border. My drive of the morning lay before me in laborious miniature. They wanted me to stay to see the kites fed, but the sun was hot and high, and I was resolved to stand that evening within the courts of Conjeeveram.

The descent of the bosky rock afforded other diversions ; the name of a Dutchman carved in the seventeenth century, the pillared cell of an anchorite excavated perhaps in the seventh. I made my way to the carts and off, but a mile beyond the village I got out and sat by the wayside in a scanty shade, and looked my last upon the tiara-towers at the horizon, and the rock-temple above. Around the latter kites were wheeling in sunlight four hours old ; so perhaps I saw the feeding-ceremony after all.

CHAPTER XI

CONJEEVERAM

WITH the help of the railway I reached Conjeeveram the same afternoon, and took a *jutka*, the Dravidian cab, for the great temple of Vishnu. I propose now to speak only of this, but there are many temples in Conjeeveram; one Saiva shrine at least as great and grand, and divers other, smaller and older, of unique historic and architectural interest. Once the capital of the Pallava Dynasty, this 'Benares of the South' is still a very big town, to judge from the innumerable streets, pleasantly rural and populous with cocoanut trees, through which I had to drive.

In a wide thoroughfare we passed a tall car profusely carven, a sister vehicle to those of Kalikundram, but built in darker wood. Its gods and warriors and gryphons were worm-eaten as those, and wore a stricken air which satisfied the Jew in me; a leprous company of idols! As we approached the temple gate we noticed a tall ramshackle 'pandal' or temporary pavilion of timber, cloth and matting in the street, an odd patchwork of rusticity and splendour, under the eaves of which a crowd loitered, and men bearing two enormous tasselled umbrellas.

Some religious functionary, they said, or waning Pope of the half-world of which we know so little, was to visit here to-night.

Threading the eye of a fine gopuram, but not of the largest, we stood within the outer court of the temple. 'Immediately within the gateway' (says the diary in a voice now rather far away), 'stood two canopies or colossal umbrellas of stone, in shape like that which crowns the tower of a central shrine, but supported, in such fashion as I have not elsewhere seen, on four slender carven monolithic pillars, nearly thirty feet high. Beyond these, shadowed more by a makeshift porch of timber, was the gloomy door that leads to the inner mysteries, from which perforce I turned away. . . .'

To the left of the forecourt, better remembered, was a magnificent pillared hall or *mandapam*, apparently an exact copy of that seen by me in the morning at Kalikundram, but this, I thought, of later date, for it was in perfect preservation. A stone glory of gods edged the roof, and over the eaves with sportful fancy lifelike lizards had been carved, and a cat catching pigeons. From each corner hung a stone chain of circular links, a miracle of craftsmanship; but these were now looped up, because the eternal street-boy persists in throwing stones through them, and more than one has lost the carven fruit or tassel at the end, and perhaps a link or two.

The beasts and riders, into which the dark supporting monoliths had been carved, were in perfect preservation, and perhaps for that very reason I missed, or thought I missed, an infinitesimal something of the truth to life, which I had found in

those first apocalyptic monsters ; as if the craftsmen here had been just one degree and generation further removed from nature and liberty, than the men who made those.

Beyond the hall a fine pool, set in a stone frame of stairs, prolonged the columns and clustering pilasters of many stone pavilions and shrines, some of them islanded in the water. Here the god rests when upon certain stated and solemn occasions he goes aboating. It is said that English guns lie rusting at the bottom of this tank, thrown there for safety when Haidar beat Baillie in 1780. On one side of the tank was a stable, where stood a white horse installed, and a small elephant wearing between his brows the forked Vaishnava caste-mark, red and white, on a scale impossible to human Pharisees ; reminiscent rather of the creases of a cricket pitch.

As we came back to the forecourt a company of some thirty Brahmins, naked, plump, and jocular, with freshly lined phylacterics, trooped out of the gate carrying a wooden platform, on their way to fetch the idol home, I suppose, from some state visit. A poor Brahmin of the same Theban generation, but sadder-eyed, led me past the cavern-mouth of the inner mysteries, a swarm with idle Hophni and Phineas, and along the desolate outer court to the eastern end, where stood the tallest gopuram of all, circled with evening swallows. There was a strange reek of bats in the dark of the gateway. I examined the sculpture of the stones, peered into the suffocating hole where the ladder was that led to the upper storeys, and out of the postern to the quiet neighbourhood of priests' houses beyond. Before the gopuram another and smaller pool, the

bath of the goddess as the other of the god, patiently wore the green mantle of neglect.

Returning to the more cheerful western court I now dismissed my Levite and sat down in front of the elephant-stable on the stone brink of the other pool. I wished to contemplate the scene alone, to receive into my secret soul the influence and lesson of so much visible faith and art and history, solidified indeed and rock-engraven, yet still populous and alive. Brahmins at their evening ablutions, and once a family of pilgrims, comely Sudra women, dabbled and plashed softly in the troubled twilight of the pool. I tried to commit to memory the materials of the hour and place, the twinkling square of water and its busy stairs, the gorgonised riders of the marriage-porch, whereunder a portion of deep night was already gathering, the graceful canopies of the forecourt, the massy pile of the gatehead in the sky behind.

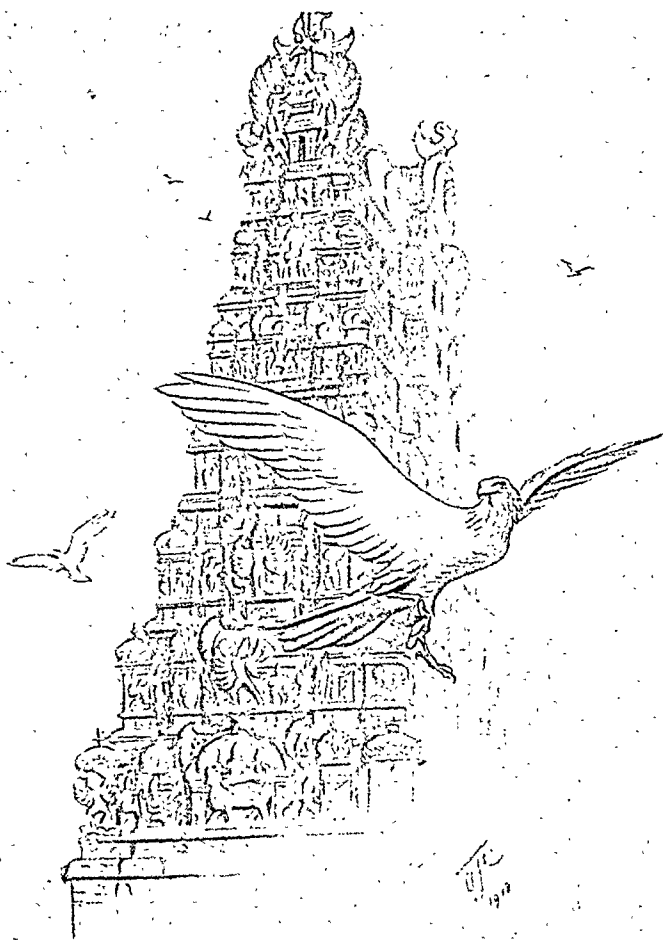
They say that one of the old Tamil poet-saints makes mention of this temple in a well-known canticle. That fame and music of another hemisphere is sealed to us, but I think the words that came into my mind must somewhat have resembled his; and if the application of the vocatives should seem blasphemous to bigot minds, their sense is near enough to that of the Sanskrit polysyllables, with which a Brahmin would supply their place. 'O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts! Yea the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young, even thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my king and my God! For one day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a

door-keeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.' The tender and passionate words of the Israelite seemed to voice the very spirit of the Tamil sanctuary.*

An idle schoolboy, watching the stranger afar off, the 'long long thoughts' of youth in his eyes, came at my beck. In the south, where they speak so many languages, your idle schoolboy is your errant Anglo-Saxon's readiest interpreter. This one lived, it seemed, in the street under the western tower. He told me further that he was 'reading third form' in the local high school; that the priests always cracked jokes as they went to bring the idol home; that Brahmins bathed and prayed morning and evening, and many other things that I knew already or might have guessed; yet I found interesting even these commonplace exchanges with a young mind, which had taken shape within the daily sight and solemn influence, however unapparent, of the temple and its life. For I remembered that I had myself grown up in the hallowed quiet of such another country street, at the end of which stood a tower of ancient fame. . . .

* A good idea of the great Tamil hymn-writers (seventh to ninth centuries, A.D.) may be gathered from *Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints*, by Kingsbury and Phillips (Oxford University Press, 1921). Of the equally well-known Vaishnava writers of the same period, of whom the saint mentioned in the text must be one, I have seen no version in English. Only the core of the fane, now hidden from the foreigner by accretions, and perhaps 'improved' beyond recognition, can belong to the period of the classic hymns. Several almost unaltered temples of that (the Pallava) period are to be seen at Conjeeveram, looking very small beside the temples now in vogue. Big gopurams were not built before the sixteenth century.

Outside there were lights in the street-tabernacle, and Brahmins sitting in rows and a kind of portable ark or shrine set up within. As I looked back toward the temple I saw that a lamp had been lit in every tier of the western gopuram.



THE GATEHEAD.

CHAPTER XII

MADURA

MADURA is a city in the far south, and very old. You will find her name recorded in Ptolemy's Greek, *Modoura*, which better represents the Tamil pronunciation than does the English form. Her ancient Pandya kings, who early grew rich upon the local pearl fisheries, and are mentioned in Asoka's Edicts, were connected by the Greeks with King Pandion, by themselves and their neighbours with the five legendary Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata. Of that remote civilisation there are now probably few material remains. The monuments of Madura chiefly refer to the seventeenth-century Naiks, those powerful viceroys of the great Southern Hindu Empire of Vijayanagger, who rivalled and outlasted the splendour of their suzerain. Such is the palace, a strange and stately blend of Saracenic and Palladian, overlaid as by enchantment with Dravidian dragons. Many of the city's antiquities are later yet. Some of the richest carving of the temple belongs to the eighteenth century, the north gopuram even to the nineteenth.

But what makes Madura almost unique among the cities

of the world, wherein the past can best be studied, is the fact that her antiquity generally, though having its roots far back in an almost Babylonish past, is also of the twentieth century. I speak of no stagnation. Art and religion here, at least until quite recently, were alive and growing, but with a vigour and direction imparted long ago. The life seen here to-day is sister to the life of ancient Shinar, a younger sister, and grown up late in time.

The glory and pontifical crown of Madura is the great double temple, or pair of temples (but they stand within the same enclosure) of Siva and Minākshi. You hear more of the goddess, the Fish-eyed, though her husband's lodging is larger ; and I suspect that she represents an older local cult, espoused later by the religion of the Brahmins. There are in India many temples far older, many holier than this, some more cunningly designed and adorned ; few larger, grander, and more intricate, none more crowded, busy, and eloquent of the living past. For size, you could put all the temples of Benares within the Madura precinct, and have room to spare. In extent, variety, and occupation, it resembles rather a city than a temple, and a city where you will not quickly learn your way about.

Why the folk in the Madura precinct, worshippers, priests, merchants, busybodies and idlers, should always be so much more numerous and active than elsewhere, even, for instance, than in neighbouring Rameswaram, whither all India goes on pilgrimage, I have never been quite able to understand. Apparently the good people of Madura, which is a large and flourishing town, spend much of their time in the temple, like

Anglo-Indians at a club, or Greeks in their agora, and so fill the place themselves, without the help of pilgrims and sight-seers, of whom, however, there is no lack. I have been to the Madura temple several times, and know well the lie of its courts and edifices ; but to explain it is another matter, and I shall attempt only a general description.

The temple is foursquare, like the Heavenly Jerusalem, and girt with a high wall. In the middle of each side is the usual pylon or gopuram, but far taller than usual, and all crusted with idols ; four towers that crown the city like the tiaras upon the fourfold brows of Brahma. There is difference among these greater towers, as also among the lesser cluster, that guards the interior shrines. One is taller, another stouter, this shews a curving, graceful skirt, that a rigid escarpment. Let us approach the great eastern gopuram, which rises next the decorated porches of Minkakshi. Her temple lies to the south, alongside the god's, which occupies the centre of the quadrate.

The great pile of the gatehead is plastered thick with images, which stand sentinel before its innumerable storeyed, lessening cells, like an enormous and splendid swarm of bees ; all the mystic and many-weaponed persons of the Saiva Pantheon, infinitely multiplied and repeated and reduced, and carried in rising ranks, and receding tiers, up to the horns and scrolls of the topmost roof. Here and there, and there again, rides Shiva with his bride upon Nandi, their flounced, familiar bull. There, and yonder, he appears as Nataraja, the dancer, his polyp arms spread round him like an aureole, as he weaves the

mystic dance of the worlds, the universal and eternal dance of life, which is the pastime of God. Near him, with arms as many, and a whole brigade of heads, Skanda, the War-god, Siva's first-born, rides upon his peacock, a fine image of the pomp and circumstance of ancient Asian war. Nor is the figure of his brother Ganapathi, round-bellied, elephant-faced, the people's darling fetish, less conspicuous and frequent along the ranks of this pyramid of idols, and plastic pandemonium.

Above the great stone gate itself a gopuram is generally built of brick, and the images of the same region are commonly not carved in stone, but formed of some hard plaster, or baked clay, which proves, however, hardly less durable than stone itself. The figures were once brightly painted, but time has toned the colours to a general warm russet, with just enough suggestion of difference to set off the sculpture.

Immediately within, and all about the eastern gates of the god and goddess, there is a gloomy labyrinth of arcades and corridors, solemn indeed and lofty, but choked with shops and stalls of food and fruit and sweets, garlands, toys and various glittering knacks whose nature and use I have forgotten, save that they seemed to have little to do with temple-worship. But sculptured saints stood with joined hands among the confectionery, hoar dragons guarded the trash of the toyshops, and cheap cutlery from Birmingham.

From this imposing den of thieves we pass into the outer court, which is here confined and crowded with various porches of a similar architecture, but elsewhere spreads, uneventful and empty, between the sanctuaries and the outer wall. We are

now directly before the temple of the god ; but resolving, with proper gallantry, to visit the goddess first, we make a diagonal march to the left, and threading other colonnades and chambers, find ourselves within the cloister of the Golden Lily Pool, which lies opposite her ancient shrine.

A colonnade and frame of stairs surrounds the emerald oblong of the pool, which is entirely void of the flower whose name it bears ; the defect is duly glossed with a legend, but I suppose the title was never more than conventional. The colonnade is deeper, and grows proud and quaint at the far end of the pool. Monolithic dragons, and armed Atlantes, taken the place of the polygonal columns ; you pass the painted porch, a Dravidian Poikile, and the stone trellis of Queen Someone's bower, built over the water, and the Parrot Hall, where a few macaws materialise in cages, more faithful than the pool's too titular lilies. In the wall at the back two doors, elaborately framed, lead into the respective sanctuaries of the goddess and her warrior son. Brahmin folk, chiefly women, pass in and out, but we may not follow ; nor can the curious eye distinguish anything within, but utter darkness.

This pool and its colonnade, and especially the chain of porticos before Minakshi's shrine, are always the most crowded and lively portions of the temple. The steps and water are constantly thronged with bathers, and visited of housewives bearing brazen pitchers ; the cloisters full of naked, sleek and shaven Brahmins, lounging, chatting, meditating, waiting to minister, for a fee, to the spiritual needs of pilgrims. One chants a spell for a pair of rustics, which seems chiefly concerned

with the business of informing the god, not only of the name, parentage and present address (in a geography no longer recognisable) of the persons on whose behalf it is recited, but also of the particular point and minute of eternity, the hour, and year, and æon (he species the 'Kaliyuga, or as we perhaps might say, the iron age) in which the service is performed, and reward expected ; a formula crude perhaps in some respects, but calculated to a degree not often found, I cannot help thinking, in our own liturgies, to make a simple fellow realise his own littleness, and the metaphysical mystery of the universe.

The occupation of a second smooth gymnosophist brings us into touch with another aspect of Hinduism. He is about to address himself to an extensive and multifarious vegetable banquet which a wealthy Sudra has arranged in leaves upon the floor of the cloister. The repast is intended ultimately for the refreshment of an ancestor of the host, who is to be reached, apparently, by way of the mediating Brahmin, as we pay money into a bank (the figure is substantially Sankara's, the great apostle of Hindu monism) for the benefit of someone in another country. Near the portal of the goddess a number of women are busily preparing for the celebration of some family rite, of the exact meaning of which we are unaware, but which might be taken for a living illustration of that incident in the Gospel, known as the Purification of the Temple. Upon the pavement opposite the entrance to the shrine is carved a bossy lotus ; and before it, among fruit-offerings laid in leaves, a beautiful Brahmin girl, such as only in India could

be surely known for the wife she is, has been made to sit. Her face is pale as faintly-dusking ivory, but so are her hands and arms, and the naked strip of waist that shines between her close green bodice and the folds of her soft red-admiral silks, so is the shapely leg shewn bare to the knee as she crouches, nervously fingering her toes, and waiting for the old folks, the portly dames and widows, who have gone into the sanctuary to arrange some other part of the rite, and left her there alone.

A little further on, a lusty choir of Brahmins, squatted likewise upon the pavement, suddenly raises a Sanskrit chant, in some quasi-Gregorian mode ; whether with reference to any of the private ceremonies here described, or as part of the daily service of the temple, we are not in a position to say. On the steps below the pavement where the young wife waits, a grand old Brahmin, indifferent to other people's pieties, sits with a pot of water beside him, and a piece of mirror in his left palm, and paints the caste-mark upon his forehead with as minute care as any Jezebel.

At the north end of the gallery that extends before Minakshi's chamber, a postern, a yard, and a second postern lead us into the dark and lofty corridor that entirely surrounds the sanctuary of the god himself. The precinct of Sundareswara, the name of Siva which is here held in reverence, is not, I think, so popular, at least on ordinary days, as his consort's, nor so cheerful of aspect. Here is no hum of human conversation, no pleasant splash of water, little daylight, rare sunbeams, no glimpse of the sky, or of the tall towers, with their brocade of gods, that overpeer the outer courts ; no movement, save of

a few groping pilgrims, or a stir of sleepers in odd corners. Architecturally, however, the den of the male deity is far grander and more solemn than the sunny, painted quarters of his bride. The proportions and aspect of the corridor in which we stand are terrific; those great fluted buttresses, too massy for the name of columns, those gryphon-monoliths that lean out of the gloom in long perspective, might well be the rocky brood of old Persepolis, or older Egypt.* On three sides of the cellar the long, groined, echoing passages are empty and monotonous, save for the occasional dark bulk of an idol, or blacker entrance to some subsidiary shrine. Only on the far flank there glimmer through bars between the buttresses the white-washed pillars of a large *mandapa* or portico, deserted and inaccessible, which belongs, I believe, to a building once dedicated to Vishnu, but now shut up and imprisoned, as it were, within the stronghold of his rival; for you must know that in these latter days the persons of the Hindu Trinity have fallen out among themselves, and each disputes the supremacy of the other; at Chidambaram alone, where a shrine of Vishnu stands, as here, within the gates of Siva, have I seen them still worshipped side by side, a conservation, apparently, of the older custom.

But as we wind round to the east front of the cella the

* When I wrote this I was not clearly aware of what now seems to me the indubitable fact, visible at a glance to anyone who, knowing South Indian architecture and the Maharashtra caves, looks at photographs of the Persepolitan ruins, *viz.*, that Indian architectural forms were derived very largely from Persepolis; which itself shews Egyptian as well as Assyrian influence. Mogul architecture is a later derivation of the same school.

magnificence of the architecture, and other symbols of the god's majesty, are suddenly multiplied ; and there is a new stir of life also, religious and secular ; for not only has the daily state and service of the god to be maintained, but we are now again approaching the neighbourhood of the arcades and crowded galleries of the god's bazaar, by which we originally entered, and of which we now catch the distant murmur as we debouch upon his granite atrium. For now the corridor expands into a hall or covered palace-court, which is by far the noblest apartment of the temple. Opposite the portal of the sanctuary is planted the *stambham*, or standard of the god, a jointed pillar plated with gold ; and immediately behind it the bull-god sits beneath an exquisite stone canopy, guarded by colossal columns in the same style as those that line the corridor, but far more curiously carven, and displaying in florid sculpture upon base and shaft the various aspects and achievements of the god and goddess. Further yet, and flanking the eastern entrance to this tremendous anteroom, are four huge idols of the same, four shapes of wrath, blackened with oil from head to foot, and splashed about the pedestal and nether limbs with rice grains, and red and yellow saffron, and other evidence of worship and propitiation. They exude a bitter oily odour, which might seem to represent the very essence of Dravidian idolatry.

The whole effect upon the mind of this majestic hall is powerful and strange in the extreme. I liked to linger here, and watch the hours pass over it. Sometimes there is an outburst of noisy life, as when, with a tinkle of bells and blowing of horns, the temple elephants (they have been to the river to

fetch water for the morning bath of the god) loom up through the long aisle of the bazaar and sweep aside from the entrance ; or else a sudden vision of Brahmins, bearing something swiftly, passes before we have time to notice it, and is extinguished with its music in the darkness of the corridor, whereupon we are told that the god has gone upon his daily round, the object of which is to make sure that the minor deities, his guests, are being properly looked after. It will be observed, both here and at Chidambaram, that the general aim of the temple ritual and equipment is to serve and furnish forth the god as an earthly king of the olden time, with his flag and his car, his horses and elephants, throne-room and bed-chamber ; his times for sleep, food, bath and exercise, his marriage annually renewed ; even the vestibular bazaar, as I now remember, has its counterpart in the Imperial Palace at Delhi. In this regard the temple economy resolves itself into nothing more mysterious than the maintenance of a magnificent antiquarian doll's house.

The thought, like the music of the little procession, is quickly overpowered and swallowed in the gloom of those huge entablatures ; silence and awe quickly return to their habitual haunt. Presently a sunbeam, slipt from the roof, strikes the edge of the bull-god's canopy, and sets the base of the golden standard afire ; and suddenly on the other side of one of those carven bulks a small sweet voice arises, a woman's voice, very soft and musical and glad, singing a kind of psalm. The slender note is at the same time solemn and lyrical, something between plainsong and birdsong. Indeed I listened (for I am narrating a real experience) as fearfully and still, as one listens

to a timid bird. When it ceased (and it lasted several minutes, though the singer seemed to deliver the verses very fluently), I stole from behind the pillar, and saw, in the act of completing her devotions, a cheerful dame of middle age, wrapped in the plain white sheet that is the widow's weeds of India. On that side of the pillar there was a small sculpture of Hanuman the monkey-god, distinguished as an object of popular devotion by such smears and savoury unction as obscure also the great idols of the doorway. To this queer demi-god, apparently, that serious and beautiful strain had been addressed. The fact struck me as a paradox, for I was not yet aware of the nobility that underlies the conception of Hanuman, and which claimed the reverence of mediæval India. The Hindus excel in that mode of religious symbolism which Ruskin calls the grotesque sublime, and which they carry beyond the point where, to the uninitiated foreigner, it becomes ridiculous. This canonised animal is the type, not wanting in pathos, of loyal, strenuous and effective service on the part of a mind and arm not made for higher things; an ideal surely not unworthy of a poor widow's adoration.

But what, you ask, of the Holy of Holies, the inner shrine itself? I have been told, by a Hindu friend with whom I once visited the temple, that there is nothing within but darkness and bare walls, and the primitive, plain stone emblem of the god. If you or I peer too curiously into the murky portal, the odds are that some fussy temple officer will come bridling up, and tell us that we must not go any further. If you answer that you have no wish to do so, and continue to loiter in the

neighbourhood, he does not believe your words, but posts two of his minions on each side of the door, lest you should try to sneak in as soon as his back is turned ; or so at least it once happened to me.

But I should like, if I did not fear to tire the reader, to linger here till evening falls, the night, say, of some monthly lunar festival ; till the lights are lit in the shrines, and all the little saucer-lamps upon the brazen frames of the principal doors are twinkling down the alleys. I came here once on such a night with X, a continental painter and a traveller. We stood near the pinfold of the planets, which is a little to the north of the golden standard. The idols of these gipsy godlings, facing different ways, are disposed upon a raised stone slab or table resembling a large tombstone, and surrounded by a heavy rail. The chief business of the throngs on that night (they were chiefly women) was apparently, after a visit to the main shrine, to walk nine times around this table, or altar, first pouring oil and leaves upon a fire that flared in a great brazier opposite. To this work they issued from the sanctuary in a never-ending stream. Some priests within the rail were busy at the table, which was covered with lights, flowers and other offerings ; they seemed both to receive and to dispense, but the detail of the ritual I had not then learning enough to notice or to remember. X declared, and I could well believe, that this concourse in the flickering glare and gloom of the great carven corridor was the most impressive sight he had ever seen, and carried him back to ancient Babylon and the world of Herodotus, which now at least he felt that he had seen, and could understand. He

had lately visited the temples of upper Egypt, but those, he said, were dead bones, while here was antiquity alive. Now this is very nearly how every man of sensibility, who goes to Madura, and has wit enough to analyse his feelings, will express himself. The fact is not flattering to the sentimental traveller, who desires to be thought original; but seems to argue a kind of objectivity in the dreams that haunt such places, which cannot fail to be pleasing to one who loves them.

Madura has other wonders, but these I leave for the guide to shew you. There is the Hall or *Mandap* of a Thousand Pillars, which stands in the outer court, on the north side of the Hall of the Standard; it is full of curious sculpture, among which some four large statues, though apparently true seventeenth-century Dravidian, shew an attention to anatomical detail rare in Indian art, which may or may not be due to some wandering European influence.* There is the handsome 'choultry' of Tirumalai Naik, a monumental corridor-hall, which faces the East Gate on the other side of the street, and which is represented in several English prints of a hundred years ago. There are the temple jewels, 'barbaric pearl and gold,' and the processional cars and idols, which are stabled somewhere near the Hall of Pillars. Nor is the town itself, with its flat-roofed houses, hiding one cannot guess what secrets of the ancient world, without interest to the stranger; scriptural passages, classic postures; a lotus capital beneath a balcony, a lotus face at a window. X and I fell into conversation with a citizen

* The Hall of a Thousand Pillars is a Persepolitan idea reproduced after two thousand years.

about his carven door-jambs, by way of which we were led into a less picturesque discussion concerning the prospects of his son at school; a discussion which I endured, however, the more gladly, because at that moment two very handsome young women, daughters or sisters-in-law (for in these Hindu homes the generations tread on one another's heels), with skins pale as Lydian gold, and robes of sombre silk like smouldering fires, came home from the place of drawing water, and resting their beaded pitchers upon the door-sill turned to regard the foreigners over the shoulder of the goodman, timidly indeed and with a show of stealth, but less than our northern damsels would have made. The next morning, as I sat in Minakshi's porch, the fairer of the two (but indeed I have no recollection of the other) went down to the Golden Lily Pool for water. She dipped her jar demurely, but greeted me with a smile under drooping lids as she withdrew between the sentinel dragons; a look of gracious and shy recognition, which made me feel at first very happily at home in Zion, and familiar amid all that stone antiquity, but afterwards to wish that I were more so.

I am constrained to close upon a note of apprehension. You may buy little gods in the Madura bazaars, akin apparently to the temple sculpture, and steeped in the odour of old sanctity. Too often nowadays they prove to be forgeries, new ware made rough, buried awhile, dug up, and kept for sale as old brass to the Americans. For these have discovered Madura before ourselves, who have lived there for a hundred years. Consequently, though there is still no city in South India where you can to more advantage study the real religion of

antiquity, there is none where you can more easily buy false gods, or as some would say, gods doubly false (unless two wrongs should make a right) than in Madura, the city of Minakshi. May it be long ere the dissolvent curiosity, or blasting disapproval of the West goes deeper!

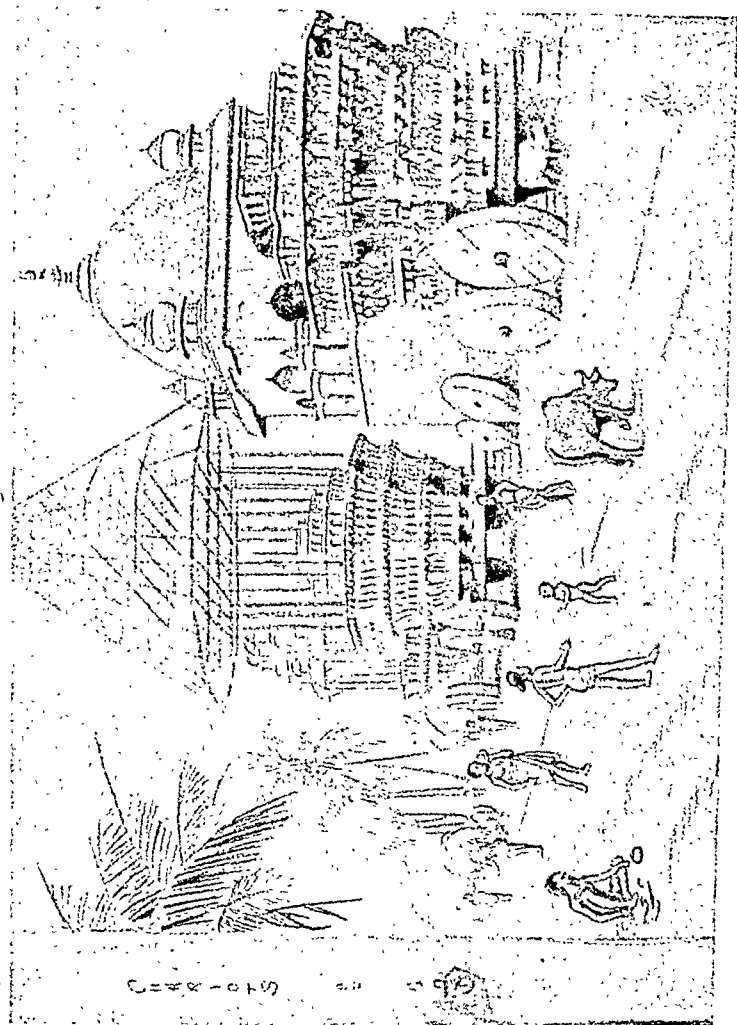
CHAPTER XIII

CHIDAMBARAM

THE pleasure of temple haunting is not without its train of petty troubles, especially in places off the beaten track, where strangers are seldom seen. A European is never certain how far into the precinct he will be allowed to go, while the further he proceeds, the greater the number of subsidiary shrines at which he is expected to make an offering, or pay toll ; for in mediæval India, which you enter at the gopuram, it is considered rude to approach even an earthly prince without a present. True, the members of the divine household acknowledge every contribution with a necklace of marigolds, which corresponds perhaps to the robe of honour formerly bestowed upon visitors by the Emperor of Delhi ; but these decorations soon become themselves an encumbrance. In out-of-the-way temples, moreover, the stranger is accompanied upon his rounds by a crowd of urchins and idlers ; and in a large Tamilian shrine the name of such persons is legion.

I lately visited the temple of Natarāja, the Dancer, at Chidambaram.* The Dikshitas, a sect or tribe of Brahmins

* Chidambaram is the holiest of Tamil Śaiva shrines. It is mentioned (under its old name of Tillai) by Manikka Vasahar, the greatest



CHARIOTS OF GOD.

whose hereditary right it is to conduct the worship, and share the revenues of the temple, keep considerable state. They made me leave my boots under the gopuram; 'put off,' they said, 'thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy': a requisition with which it was not in my conscience to refuse compliance, particularly as I wanted very much to see the temple. But the pavement of the outer court was rough and weedy, and a European always feels rather small and foolish without his boots; and I suspected that the Dikshitas arrogated unto themselves much of the honour of my homage, for they seem to regard the god as a kind of elder brother, or first among equals, and boast that he has but a lot and share in the sacred household, like one of themselves. The Hindus know more than we do about God, but they sometimes appear to presume upon their familiarity. . . . These Dikshitas are sleek, well-grown fellows, who wear the golden emblem of the god embossed upon the clasp of their rosaries, and knot their hair jauntily on one side of the head, not at the back, as ordinary Brahmins do. Some of the boys in their white clothing and sallow shapeliness were especially charming, and the younger ones reminded me of

of the hymn-writers (? ninth century) in the following verse, quoted from Kingsbury and Phillips, *Hymns of the Tamil Saivite Saints*; and in many other old hymns.

'I fear no javelin's gory blade,
Nor sidelong glance of bangled maid;
But when I see men void of grace
Drinking no sweetness from the face
Of my unchiselled Gem, whose dance
In Tillai's hall is seen, whose glance
Melts men's whole frame to ecstasy,
Terror such sight inspires in me.'

Italian angels, but without the rose. Nor in their main did their manners belie their looks, though in a troop of children following a stranger (and at Chidambaram I trailed at first as many urchins as Elisha) original impudence cannot but sometimes bubble over into laughter, and I noticed that these pretty neophytes knew in what corner of the gods' great carven car the wanton passage would occur, which superstition adds to discount envy, and avert the evil eye.

To see these cars was one of the main objects of my visit. I had somehow never got sight of the processional cars of the Madura deity, though doubtless he somewhere stables vehicles worthy of his wealth and fame. My memory of the majestic ancient hulks, and piled-up miracles of wood-carving, maintained even by small villages in the Tanjore country, had grown so dim, and was so different from what I daily saw of the crude pageants of the north, that, more faithless than the sceptical apostle, I had almost ceased to believe what I had seen. My unbelief was needless. I was lucky enough to arrive at Chidambaram a few days before a festival, and the cars stood in a line before the eastern gopuram, bared of their huge caps of thatch, and ready to be decorated. They were, if I mistake not, five in number, enough to accommodate all the persons of Siva's household, and one over. The 'chariot of paternal deity' was new, and the height of the wooden hull alone (for I say nothing of the scaffolding, naked now, but intended to carry the canopy), must have been nearly twenty feet. The car was, as usual, octagonal in shape, and overhung; and though inferior to some of the older cars in design and

ornament (for it inclined to a rather insipid elegance), it was by no means unworthy to be placed among them. The former car of the god, which stood beside it, and was perhaps to devolve upon his consort, was not so large, but far superior in boldness and beauty of design, and ornamental fancy. It stood like a museum on wheels, a moveable abridgement of Dravidian sacred art, not only learnedly representing all the persons and legends of the Saiva mythology, but displaying in exquisite miniature upon corbel, bracket, panel and moulding nearly all those decorative devices, and canonical figures, the model shrines, and lotus bells, and mounted atlantes, and ramping beasts, and curious columns, and florid scrolls, that together constitute the very style and language of those epics in stone, the temples of the South. The other three cars were neither so large nor so elaborate as these, but seen anywhere else, would have well deserved admiration and study.

As a reward, perhaps, for taking my boots off, I was allowed much further into the sacred apartments than is usual with strangers in other temples. I was welcomed, in fact, into the innermost enclosure, saw the granite bedchamber of the god, and stood before the ancient silver steps, curiously graven, of the shrine of the Dancer himself in his dancing-hall—a raised porch thronged with the yellow, lusty torsos of serviceable Brahmins, who shealed large armfuls of plantains and threw them into pans. They were engaged, I am told, in preparing the *panchamrita* or *pentanbrosia* (if I may so Hellenise the Sanskrit), the fivefold food of immortality, a

mixture of the fruit aforesaid with butter, milk, honey and water, which is dealt out as a sacrament among the worshippers. They, largely widows, waited at a brass rail aside. This place, though it occupies the centre of the temple, and contains the sacred image of the Dancer, is not the original and actual sanctuary, which stands somewhere apart between the enclosures. Nor, whether from pride or shame, or both, was I shown the famous Air Lingam, the Secret of Chidambaram, which is no more, I am told, than an empty cell, said to contain the invisible emblem of the god ; a queer blend, like so much else of popular Hinduism, between spiritual teaching and the craft of the showman.

Many mansions are in Siva's house, which harbours, as usual, all his family ; himself, his consort Parvati, and his two sons, Subrahmaniam (or Skanda) and Ganapati ; not to mention another name or emanation of the god himself, of whose identity I am uncertain. There stands also right against the dancing-hall a considerable shrine of Vishnu, where worship is still carried on : a state of affairs which I have not seen elsewhere, for the relations between these two great persons of the Trinity have long been strained, and they may be said to divide the reverence of the Hindu world between them. Many of these subsidiary shrines, which occur at haphazard among the courts and corridors, are old work of great beauty. Such are the mansion of the war-god in the outer enclosure, with its fifteenth-century porch of innumerable pillars, and a very similar hall near the Dancer's shrine ; which latter is described as the chariot in which the deity first came to this



SIVA AS NATARĀJA.

A copper image (7 in.) in the author's collection.

place, and is fantastically furnished, like many of the smaller mediæval chapels (including that of the war-god just described) with sculptured wheels in high relief, and a balustrade of steeds in front. But most of the corridors and cloisters of the main temple seem to be new ; canonical indeed in style, and void of European influence, but not so graceful or imaginative as the old. They are said to be due to the piety, or pride, of a local magnate, a man of great wealth and a member, I had almost said of the Sanhedrin, but indeed it was a less picturesque assembly whose name I heard—perhaps the Legislative Council of Madras.

Dreadful things are done in these out-of-the-way temples, deeds that would have made Ruskin speechless : I can think of no stronger expression. I finished my first round of the place with a sense of dissatisfaction, which I traced to the fact that I had not been shown a certain porch of the goddess Parvati, celebrated by Ferguson as a 'captain jewel,' and fairly carven historical milestone, as it were, of Dravidian architecture. Something I had seen among loose lengths of half-hewn stone lying in the outer court reminded me of the picture of this porch, which I had seen in Ferguson's book, and I asked later to be taken again to the goddess. Here was a porch indeed, but prim and stolid, indistinguishable from the new work of all the corridor. The old pillars, the priest told me, were broken, and had been taken away. Where were they ? Buried, he said. Whether he misinformed me out of ignorance, or lied to serve what unsearchable policy of the sacerdotal mind, I do not know ; but, if I

am not mistaken, I afterwards found the lovely relics lying overthrown, rejected of the builders, among those half-hewn blocks in the outer court; eight massy monoliths entire and perfect, incorporating each, as a great banyan enfolds a slim palmyra, the stemlike separate shaft and flowery capital which the master praises.

I have seen so many Dravidian temples that I found myself at Chidambaram inclined at first to fall into that superior and critical habit of mind, which Wordsworth reprehends in the nature-lover, and which betrays itself, he says, in a tendency to indulge

‘ In a comparison of scene with scene.’

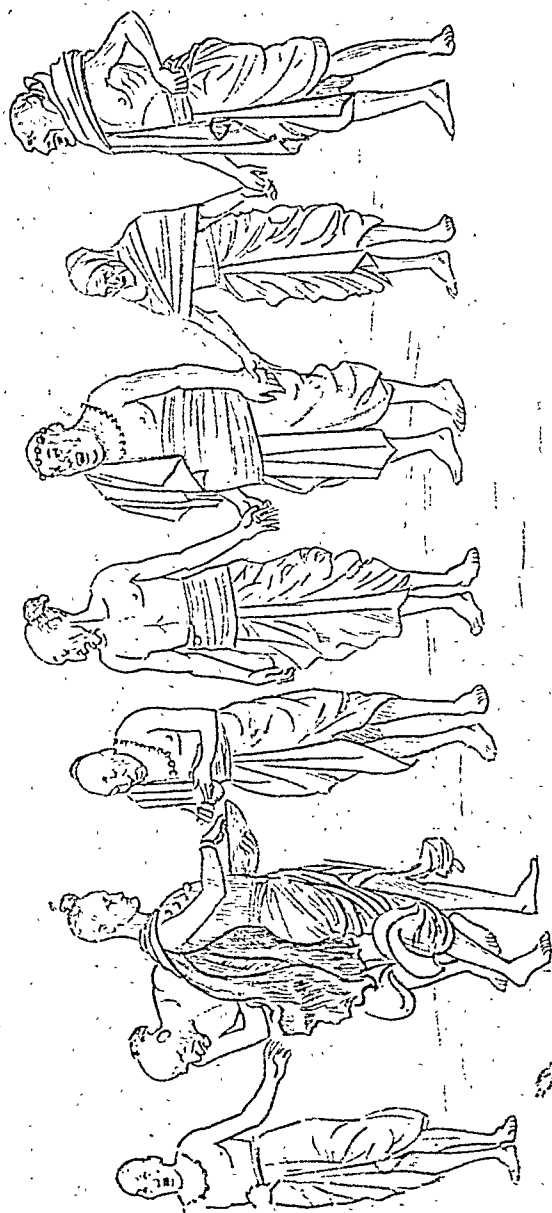
It is the virtuoso’s mood, and has its own interest and vanity; but it does not help one to understand the deeper meaning of these ancient fanes; or so, at least, it fared with me. But when the crowd of greedy sacristans and curious idlers had at last gone home to supper, and I sat on the coping of the temple pool under a high half-moon, that would fain eke out with silver the failing glory of a cloudless afterglow, the vulgarities and cares and creeping pedantries of the present age were suddenly purged off, whirled away and lost in the unpolluted ocean of the twilight, and I walked alone and unencumbered, not, indeed, in ancient Egypt, Canaan, or Assyria, but in some near and kindred country, where men thought the same solemn thoughts, and followed the same fantastic fashions, and cherished the same unintelligible sins,

in days when God, and the sons of God, moved nearer the earth than they do now.

Those were festival times at Chidambaram, and every morning the five gods went in procession through the streets nearest the temple. Wreathed and almost hidden in garlands of yellow flowers, the brazen images were carried in carved and gilded arks or thrones upon the shoulders of the temple servants. The god's two elephants, one of them a very giant, walked before, caparisoned in crimson, and there were curious flags, and a music of old-world instruments, and chanting choirs: not all in evidence at first, but added severally from day to day so as to maintain a gradual increase of display, until the climax of the festival should be marked, presumably, by the appearance of the cars. Brahmins from all parts had come together on this occasion, to minister to pilgrims, and share the bounty of the Dikshitas. Increasing numbers of them walked daily in procession hand in hand, singing responses, and receiving alms of rice, which one of the Dikshitas distributed, walking up and down the lines. This functionary, with his golden ornaments, and a scarf of crimson silk thrown over his naked shoulders, in token, I presume, of his dignity as the vehicle of the god's bounty, looked very spruce and sleek beside his poor and vagrant brethren. The latter, for processional purposes, were divided into two bands—the veterans and the bachelors. The line of the veterans was a *hortus siccus* of facial specimens, a very textbook of withered physiognomy, wherein were illustrated and exaggerated all the types, from the saintly to the criminal.

I was reminded of the crabbed faces in Gustave Doré's picture of 'The Novice.' But they sang their Sanskrit antiphonal with a vigour and sharpness of enunciation, an exactitude of mutual register, an absolute perfection of unison, such as I should not have considered possible among vagrants gathered suddenly together. They chanted like one stentorian throat, and gave me a new notion of the power of words and music, properly welded, to set each other off. The line of the bachelors, growing boys, which followed after, was a garland of innocent beauty in itself, and by comparison appeared angelic, but their choral song was feeble and wavering after the practised performance of their seniors.

I spent a week in Chidambaram, loitering and making sketches. I became familiar with the life of the place, and learned the ritual of the festival. I found a constant amusement, not only in the accumulating detail of the show itself, but also of its unrehearsed effects, and humble human interludes, such as the quarrels of ambitious urchins for the right of carrying the various umbrellas, flags and gonfalons, as we waited under the gatehead tower for the procession to appear. Within the temple itself I began to know by sight most of the younger Dikshitas, and in what chapel each one was an acolyte. They were attractive lads, and on their part seemed more interested in a European stranger, and more kindly disposed, than some of their elders; but I spoke few words to them, and that through casual interpreters, for they knew no English, and I no Tamil. They seemed to lead a simple and easy life among the cloisters, but I saw some evidence of



570

The God's Bounty

THE GOD'S BOUNTY.

wholesome discipline also, for upon receipt of an order, brought by word of mouth, they would start up with a pleasing alacrity. I also formed a nodding acquaintance with a fine old Brahmin, whom I guessed, from the splendour of his rosary and other ornaments, the authority of his manner, and the respect with which he was everywhere treated, to be the Chief Priest. He spoke to me several times, and was evidently anxious to be polite, but we never properly established communications, or developed a common interest. On the last day of my visit I fell into talk with him as he sat on the platform of a stone recess in the inner corridor, in company with two young Dikshitas of a very pleasing demeanour, whom I did not remember to have seen before. The old man, I remember, wanted me to make him a 'map' of the temple, or so, at least, the translator had it. In the course of this conversation I unwittingly dropped and left a paint-brush, and one of the gentle youths, who sat by the great man's side, brought it after me to the east gate. He was a lad of some seventeen years, and would have been reading, perhaps, in the shirt-clad senior intermediate class of a college, had he been destined to eat of the tree of Western knowledge; but, for good or evil, he knew only his own language and the Sanskrit, and had not been taught, among other things, to be ashamed of his comely nakedness. As he handed me the brush with dancing eyes, some instinct of devilry (for to a strict Brahmin, such as he, the touch of a European means pollution), some whim of devilry and bravado, not unmixed, I believe, with friendliness, and I know not what

suggestions of nobler thought behind, prompted him to seize my hand and shake it, clumsily indeed, for by this time I held a book as well as a brush. Before I had time fully to grasp either his intention or his hand, he was fled at full speed into the temple; or I should have held his hand for a moment, and put him to confusion.

I had to leave Chidambaram while the festival had yet some days to run, so that I did not see the cars in motion after all. But on the last night of my stay, as I left my house, fortunately early, for the little railway station, I saw the southern gatehead tower aglow with a great orange light. I hastened to the spot, and found in the street a numerous concourse of people watching the same pageant, which I had seen daily in the forenoon, but now very much enlarged, and quite transfigured. It shone, not with Washington gaslights, such as vulgarise all the night festivals of the north, and even of Madras, but in a fierce old-fashioned flare of torches. There were the elephants, the musicians, the Brahmin choirs, reinforced beyond recognition; but the gods themselves, who came after, no longer rode in chairs, or arks, or whatever you choose to call the little tabernacles in which they moved before, but upon their appropriate 'vehicles' (*vahanam*), Siva on his bull, Skanda on his peacock, Ganapati on his bandecoot, like the Seven Deadly Sins in an old Morality. All too hurriedly I perused this weird procession. The animals were cast in some silvern metal, and the style of Siva's bull in particular put me in mind of Jeroboam's idol, or the calf in Horeb. They were fixed upon huge timbers,

and borne shoulder-high by a much greater number than were before found necessary to carry the tabernacles. High above the smoke and glare, the din, the moving multitudes, the dance of monstrous shadows, a green moon, three-quarters full, the moon of the festival, hung aslant in a sky of jade.

PART III

OTHER MOMENTS (AND SOME ETERNITIES)

CHAPTER XIV

THE WORLD AND THE FLESH

I

LET there be no doubt about it: caste, except in so far as everything in ancient India was religious, is not a religious but a worldly institution. There is no caste (between Hindus) at Kasi (Benares) or at Puri. Even the Brahmin, when he renounces the world (as every Brahmin should in his old age), lays aside his sacred thread. Hence I entitle my section on caste, 'the world.' According to the Brahminical tradition there are four principal castes or 'colours' (for caste in its general plan is merely a complex of colour-bars): the Brahmin, the Kshatriya (prince or warrior), the Vaisya (merchant) and the Sudra (labourer). Of these only the first three wear the sacred thread, investiture with which is regarded, like our own baptism, as a sort of regeneration, entitling the wearer to the style of a 'twice-born' man. An ancient sentence asseverates that in caste there is 'no fifth,' and the millions excluded even from the Sudra class are therefore technically casteless, or outcast, though polite officialism nowadays always refers to this extra division

as Panchama, or the 'fifth,' and the designation is becoming generally current. All five divisions are innumerable subdivided, the subdivisions being largely occupational.

The 'Pariahs' are a numerous subdivision of the Tamil outcasts, but the word has come to be applied by Europeans to Indian outcasts generally.*

This orthodox four-caste system has never been quite successfully applied to the South, when there are innumerable castes indeed, but of the four main caste-groups only two, the Brahmin and the Sudra, are properly represented. Kshatriyas and Vaisyas are few, and either of northern origin or doubtful authenticity (as Shivaji, the Maratha hero, by caste a cultivator of the class usually ranked as Sudra, 'for a great price' obtained a Kshatriya pedigree from a local Brahmin). The vast majority of the superior Dravidians were classed as Sudras by the Brahmin immigrants. They have never quite reconciled themselves to this style, and many of them to-day, rather to the disgust of the Brahmins, simply call themselves non-Brahmin Hindus. This title is enough to distinguish them from the outcasts also, for these are not accorded the name of Hindus at all, though there has lately developed an inclination to extend it to them. Before the Brahmins, during the first millennium of our era, came south in large numbers, the civilisation of the region was mainly the work of the

* The word 'caste,' like so many of our Indian words, is Portuguese (Lat. *castus*, pure). The Hindus have two words, *varna* (colour) and *jati* (birth, nature, kind), the former being as a rule applied to the four main divisions only. The word 'outcast' is perhaps used because it suggests 'casteless' by a jingle. The casteless are not properly 'outcast,' for they have never been admitted.

Jainas, and it seems likely that in those days an entirely different arrangement prevailed, akin perhaps to the seven-caste system which Megasthenes found in Bengal in the third century B.C., and which evidently reminded him of the caste-system of ancient Egypt.

The Brahmins, though they pride themselves on their northern origin, are numerous and influential and class-conscious in the South to-day ; perhaps more so than anywhere else in India, because in the South Hinduism, being comparatively free from Moslem domination, has preserved a greater measure of self-esteem and a stricter ceremonial and cultural purity than elsewhere. Having always owed their predominance to intellectual culture, the Brahmins have been shrewd enough to take full advantage of Western education, and as an educationalist I have had more to do with this class than with any other, 90 per cent. of the students in college classes being Brahmins.

We usually, however, had one or two Kshatriya students. I also visited some out-of-the-way Kshatriya villages in Vizag when acting as a school inspector. I particularly remember being welcomed with old-world courtliness, and regaled with rare and cornucopian fruits, at the homestead of a Kshatriya gentleman of most majestic mien and stature, a fine figure of his tribe, and a worthy master of that, his ancestral abode ; which with its broad eaves of new thatch, its ample, well-swept spaces and substantial timbers, its air and odour of spotless rusticity and easy state, reminded me of the megaron of Odysseus. A pair of enormous clubs, such as the hero Bhima himself

might have wielded, was one of the rare pieces of movable (if they were movable) furniture to be seen. The traditional care of bodily strength which these betokened, and the various moral qualities which that care induces, make the Kshatriya more immediately congenial to the Englishman than the subtler Brahmin often is. The ideal Brahmin is a politician or a saint, but the ideal Kshatriya is a gentleman. The adaptable Brahmin is already often clever at English games, but the nature of the true sportsman is not so readily induced. The Brahmin, for instance, plays to win, and does not easily suffer honourable defeat. When I have made an end of the Kshatriyas, I will exemplify this remark. Unlike the Brahmin, the old-fashioned Kshatriya shaves no part of his head but the cheeks and chin, and wears his hair in glossy curls that hang half-way down his neck. Nowadays, however, all classes, especially in Telingana, are gradually adopting the English fashion of trimming the hair. Kshatriyas are by their rule allowed to eat flesh, but those of Telingana, I am told, imitate the vegetarian habit of their Brahmin neighbours.

I have said that the Brahmin plays to win. I could never persuade my students to cheer a victorious visiting side at football, which they played very cleverly with bare feet. After the blowing of the whistle the defeated team 'melted from the field as snow,' or rather vanished as if by magic, and was not to be found or gathered again by the most careful search; and my zeal to establish this unreasonable amenity was regarded to the end, I believe, as an obstinate craze or perverse form of tyranny. Again, I once went with a team to

Masula for the final of a tournament which, after a most gallant game, we lost by a fluke. A student of the opposite party, finding me sight-seeing in Masula bazaar next morning, biblically cried 'shame' upon me as he passed, apparently considering that I ought in decency to have hidden my diminished head.

One sometimes notices in the Brahmin also a certain lack of the more bourgeois virtue, likewise dear to the Englishman of economic pride and independence. The Brahmin has been taught for ages that he has a claim upon society for the satisfaction of his material needs, in return for his own contribution to the spiritual welfare of society. Indeed, his tradition has always insisted that in receiving such help he is to be regarded rather as conferring a spiritual favour than as accepting a material one, since it is always more blessed to give than to receive, but when a Brahmin is the recipient the difference of bliss becomes incalculable. More than once in my early days (I suppose before my unexalted habit of mind became known) I have been asked for monetary and other kinds of assistance by ambitious people who obviously did not need it, but thought to obtain interest and favour in this way.

Brahmin subtlety often seemed to me to over-reach itself, perhaps because its more successful and refined manifestations passed unnoticed. I was once investigating charges of misdemeanour against a supervisor of schools, a petty inspecting officer; his superior, the assistant inspector, who posed as a fanatical reformer, accusing him. A village schoolmaster had admitted lending the accused supervisor a hundred rupees and

receiving only ninety in return, but under examination he retracted the last part of the statement, which he said he had added to please the assistant inspector, of whom he stood in fear. I asked him if he were not ashamed, for the sake of his own miserable safety, to implicate his friend and preceptor (Guru) in this way, he having excused himself for lending the money (against regulations) on the ground that he stood in these relations to the accused man. My question was merely rhetorical, and the case continued, but the prosecuting assistant inspector had received what he regarded as a valuable hint. The supervisor next proceeded to show that he had not allowed the fact that he owed money to the schoolmaster to influence their professional relations, since he had several times omitted to promote the said schoolmaster, when he might easily have done so had he considered him the right man. This, of course, so far as it went, was a perfectly legitimate plea. 'Were you not ashamed,' thereupon exclaimed the assistant inspector indignantly, with a sidelong glance at me to see how his parody was received, 'when the man was your Guru and had lent you money—were you not ashamed to pass him over in this way?' 'It seems to me, Mr. So-and-So,' remarked the judge severely (he must be allowed to Boswellise himself a little), 'that in your anxiety to effect your immediate object, the conviction of this individual, you are in danger of losing sight of what is presumably your ulterior aim—the purification of the morals of the department as a whole!'

All the characters but one in this little tragedy, typical of the seamier side of Indian educational administration, were

Brahmins, and I have always remembered the remark of the prosecuting officer (who afterwards came to no good) as a glaring example of a quality of the old Brahminical mentality which I have often noticed as well in books (as when Kautilya in his *Politics*, having first explained how a king should control his heir-apparent, proceeds to instruct the heir-apparent in the art of countering the king) as in men, and which I know not whether to call cynicism, or opportunism, or detachment, or inconsequence, or a mere wantonness and exuberance of diplomacy. Or perhaps what I have observed was only an example of the natural clumsiness of the theorist. The old Brahmins were Teutonically fond of reducing everything to rule and precept, and I dare say that my assistant inspector's tactics were formally correct according to some ancient shaster, or according to some secret code of his own. If this book should ever find its way back to the land of its birth I hope that my candour at their expense will not be taken amiss by men among whom I have found friends as highly valued (I say it not lightly, for a more generous acknowledgment could not be intended) as any among my own people. My experience leads me to attribute racial differences, within limits which do not now concern us, far more to tradition and circumstance and far less to innate racial qualities than has hitherto been usual, but such differences are of absorbing interest notwithstanding.

Like the other 'colours,' the Brahmins of the South are divided into many sects, the members of which for the most part will dine together, but do not intermarry. Among the

Andhra Brahmins the most numerous are the Smrātas (from *Smṛiti*, tradition), who follow the oldest Brahminical tradition as embodied in the Vedānta philosophy ; believe in the ' One without a second ' (Ekam Advaita, whence they are called Advaiti), and hold that the souls of men, so to speak, are ' of one substance with the Father.' Their prophet is Sankara, the great commentator on the Upanishads, who lived in Canara in the ninth century A.D. They are subdivided into Vaidiki or Vedics, who are supposed still to follow the religious life, and Niyogi, or non-religious, who have turned to the work of the world, and follow especially administration and law. The distinction is out of date, for many Vaidikis now choose a professional career, but they are still inclined to be more strict in their observance of the Brahminical rule than the true Niyogis. The real religious Vaidiki, the temple priests and family chaplains, and the spell-rehearsing specialists who perform all ceremonies, eat the ritual dinners of the dead for them, and minister to the pilgrims in the river, are a class apart, and are despised by their worldly cousins as degraded and ignorant. A distinction, however, is drawn between the creature and his office, and an educated layman, even though he be himself a distinguished Vedic scholar, and familiar with the meaning of the difficult Vedic texts which the professional shaveling merely repeats without understanding, like a parrot, will nevertheless employ such men not only at family ceremonies, but even sometimes for his private devotions, as on the occasion of a pilgrimage.

I had an odd acquaintance with a professional Brahmin

who used to minister spiritually to pilgrims in the Godavery river. We had nothing in common but a few English words, of which he was rather proud, and perhaps a reverence, understood but never mentioned, for the sacred river. Our association was disinterested, for neither was in a position to be of much use to the other; but he was in the habit of visiting me from time to time in his simple Vedic dress (all my other visitors wore a shirt if not a coat) for several years, apparently for the mere fun of the thing, and I hope he is now doing a brisker trade in spells and absolutions than I in lectures.

Then there are the Vaishnava Brahmins, the followers of Ramanuja, a later theologian than Sankara. They wear on their foreheads the red and white caste-mark of Vishnu, whom they worship as the Supreme God, whereas the Smartas incline rather to the name of Siva, simply, I think, because they have been longer in the south, where Siva is chiefly held in honour. The Vaishnava conception of God is nearer to the European, since their great teacher 'qualifies' the older pantheistic identification of the soul with God, insisting on the 'practical' distinction between them which even the Vedanta allows; though in this respect he went less far than the followers of a yet later theologian named Madhva, who are also represented among Southern Brahmins to this day, and who call themselves Dvaiti or Dualists. The Vaishnavas are always clean-shaven, like the Tamil Brahmins. The Smartas of the Telugu country wear a moustache, but shave it off during the solemn period of mourning for a father, whence we may infer that the clean-shaven state is more in accord with primitive

rule, especially as it is favoured also by the ceremonial Brahmins. I suspect that the moustached fashion was borrowed from the military Mahrattas in the early nineteenth century along with the common use of the name or title Rao, not found in older records. Yet so quickly does custom become sacred in India that I have heard Niyogis call it wicked in men of their persuasion not to wear a moustache.

Telinga Vaishnavas are generally entitled Āchāri. In the Tamil country Smartas and Vaishnavas are entitled respectively Aiyar and Aiyungar. All Brahmins have, further, a personal and a family (or in the Tamil country a local) name, the latter being written first. The personal name is almost always one of the names of God. To take two which I have quoted: Nāgabushanam means Cobra-garland, a name of Siva; Padmanābham, Lotus-navel, a name of Vishnu. When the Brahmins of the South anglicise their interminable names, those that really matter, the personal and family names, often appear only as initials, the caste-name, or even a mere honorific, doing duty as a surname. Such styles as Mr. Rao, Mr. Achari, Mr. Aiyar, Mr. Aiyungar, Mr. Shastri, Mr. Pantulu have about as much meaning as if an Englishman should call himself Mr. Esquire or Mr. Reverend.

The most exclusive worshippers of Siva in the South to-day are not the Smarta Brahmins but the Lingayats, who are accounted Sudras, but who, unlike most Sudras, stand outside the Brahminical communion, and have their own priests, called Zangams. Still numerous in the South, they represent a powerful popular revival of indigenous Saivism which took

place in Canara in the twelfth century. They call themselves after the Lingam or phallic symbol of Siva, which they hold in great reverence, though they do not practise phallic rites. They seem to have been obscurely connected with the old Southern Buddhism.

The arrangement of a Brahmin marriage is an intricate business. The pair must be of the same sub-caste, but not of the same spiritual tribe or gotram, a mysterious cross-classification applied to all Brahmins whatsoever. Further, their horoscopes must harmonise, and so, too, must the ideas of their elders on the question of the amount of the dowry. Fathers with marriageable daughters wander far and long in search of a suitable bridegroom. I sometimes found primitive and venerable patriarchs asleep in the college verandahs in lecture hours, who had travelled to those happy hunting-grounds from remote villages, and, as it were, out of the sacred past. Oftener the matter is settled nearer home, inter-marriage within the sub-caste being so close that I was often tempted to believe that all my Niyogi students (and my students were mostly Niyogis) were related to one another.

II

Caste is still a dire impediment in all intercourse between Indians and Englishmen. During my first month in India I innocently asked a Brahmin student, who had made himself pleasant after a lecture at the Presidency College, Madras, to dine with me at d'Angeli's Hotel. It seemed natural to do

this, as he wore an English suit (so students sometimes did in Madras), and seemed very like the Indians I had known at Oxford; and further, because I wanted to hear about the country. An English friend, who knew no more of India than I (we had arrived in the same month), but who thought he knew more of Anglo-India, recoiled from me with horror when he heard what I had done, and declared that neither he nor anyone else would have anything to do with me if I dined with natives, as Indians in those days were officially styled. I am ashamed to say that I lost my nerve entirely, and sent my servant to d'Angeli's at the appointed hour to explain that his master was unhappily too ill to come. Even so, however, I scored a moral victory over the Brahmin, who did not even send a messenger to keep the appointment. He had been too polite (as Indians count politeness) to decline my invitation, but to have availed himself of it would have involved him in social and even material calamities (for the effects of loss of caste are almost incalculable), beside which the petty disapproval with which my English friend had frightened me would have seemed a trifle.

Fate had in store for me (for I was always a slow learner in the school of human absurdities) at least one more amusing (in retrospect) lesson of the same kind. I had been perhaps a year in Rajahmundry when I received an invitation to a bridal banquet at the house of a wealthy Brahmin, whose heir, the bridegroom, was reading in the college. I may have been welcomed at bridal gatherings before, but I had never been bidden to the actual feast, and I knew enough of Indian

customs by this time vainly to imagine that I had been accorded a unique honour. I was duly conducted into a long chamber, where plantain leaves, piled high with rice and various vegetable curries, were disposed upon a table amid silver bowls of butter-milk and all manner of curious confections. A number of my scholars, clad no longer in the regulation daytime coat and shirt, but in flowing purple and crimson silks and the natural majesty of their crepuscular selves, were there to welcome me; but the other wedding-guests were long in coming, and I finally learned that I was expected to dine alone, like a sort of tame goblin in a cage, while the gods of the earth regaled themselves (they were, in fact, already assembling) in the garden-court of the great house, of which the chamber in which I waited was an outwork.

My scholars mischievously unshuttered a window and invited me to peep at that copious and sacred picnic, which looked impressive enough in the lamplight with its curtaining of luminous plantain-blades and inky night. It is abomination for an unclean man even to look upon the twice-born at his meal, and suddenly a panic broke out among the nearest of the banqueters, which was only allayed by my hasty withdrawal and the closing of the shutter.

To extricate myself with decorum from the position in which I thus found myself was a matter of some delicacy. My first impulse was to shake off the dust of my feet upon that house of unconivivial hospitality; but I finally allowed myself to be persuaded that no rudeness was intended, and I resolved to avoid a rupture. I sat down to my lonely feast and tasted

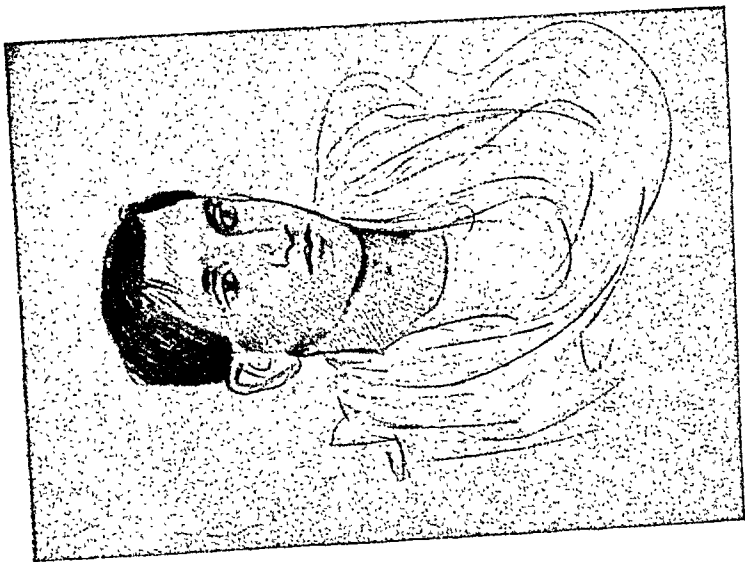
those curious dishes, while my scholars flitted scandalously between the festive brahmanas and the lonely mlechcha. One of them, who had either been deputed or had deputed (or devoted) himself to do the honours, remained with me throughout, and I shall always be grateful to him for the comfortable tact and patience with which he managed a most embarrassing situation. He is now, I believe, a rising lawyer with some prospects of a political career, and I hope he may yet represent his native land on the League of Nations, and repeat the triumph of that night on a worthier scale.

No one ever spoke to me again about that particular function, and though I have since visited many bridal gatherings, I was never again bidden to the actual banquet. It is possible that my venerable host was trying to behave in a liberal spirit, but if so, he attempted a task beyond his power. I am not sure that he deserved to succeed, for I could not help suspecting that some vanity of display, and even a certain secret pleasure in putting a foreigner (literally) in his place, was mingled with his condescension.

It is probably harder for an Englishman to enter a Brahmin's house than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. One is sometimes made welcome in the courtyard or upon the verandah pial as a special honour, but even then one is uneasily conscious of the purificatory trouble and expense of which he will be the innocent occasion. In a hired house the Brahmin is less particular, and the younger generation, living in the capital apart from ancestral sanctity, may sometimes be visited on equal terms.



A REDDI (SUDRA) BOY.



A BRAHMIN STUDENT.

As regards eating, the Brahmin's ritual squeamishness applies mainly to cooked food, about which the books of the law are precise and anxious. Of fruit and confectionery (not made with eggs) even the middle-aged and orthodox will usually partake with you. What further accommodation is found between friends upon occasion cannot, of course, be said, but generally with modern Brahmins the eleventh is the capital commandment in this matter, and a very tremendous one it is in view of the social and material danger involved in the breach of it. On the other hand, all Brahmins who have not passed the sea are resolute vegetarians. Here is a principle which they will not willingly break in the sight of God. The first sight of meat cooked for eating often fills them with physical nausea.

Meat-eating sometimes prevails among them as a secret vice, with all the fascination of a dreadful sin. This happened chiefly, I thought, among the modernists of a generation passing now, the first generation of the modernists. For the innocents of a younger age the notion of wine seemed to have something of this romantic dreadfulness, but that of meat was merely horrible.

What the Hindu finds hardest to forgive in a European or a Muhammadan is the practice of eating beef. Meat-eating in other kinds, though revolting to the Brahmin, is lawful for the Kshatriyas and other castes; but the heinousness of the crime of killing a cow, a crime which is described (with the usual utilitarian exaggeration of the moralist) as worse than that of killing any man but a Brahmin, has been deeply

inculcated into the Indian mind. This taboo, like the Jewish abhorrence of pigs, is an early prudential regulation disguised as an article of religious faith (would that all our dogmas had as much reason behind them!), and has no doubt been highly beneficial in a country which depends so largely upon the milk of the cow and the labour of the ox. The sense of its sanctity seems more deeply planted, and less easily to be uprooted by any wind of doctrine, or new spade of culture, than the religion of any of the gods except the ancestor. A young friend of mine, who enthusiastically admired the Greeks, was shocked by the reminder, and could hardly be persuaded, that the Greeks also were eaters of beef. A Brahmin employed to read to me in the evenings, on seeing me for the first time eat red beetroot served in vinegar, a vegetable strange to him, told me afterwards that he thought he was at last witnessing the dreadful act (which actually passed unnoticed) of beef-eating. He had apparently visualised it in the image of an episode in a local play, in which a goblin of the forest, the traditional enemy of the twice-born, was represented running about with cries of horrid relish and a bowl of blood. . . . In the little prosaic form of application for leave which college students had to fill, the entries in the column reserved for reasons often afforded a refreshing glimpse into the patriarchal and secret world out of which they came to us, 'trailing clouds of glory' in spite of themselves. The troubles of innumerable kinsfolk, and especially of that sacrosanct femininity which otherwise would have missed official existence, found inadequate expression there, but the prettiest entry that I remember pleaded 'the illness of the family cow.

Next to the fact that it prevents friends from honourably dining together, my greatest personal grievance against caste and the order of thought from which it proceeds was concerned with the difficulty of gaining access to the temples. This difficulty, curiously, is greater in Telingana and Orissa than among the generally stricter Tamils. It is impossible for a foreigner to enter even the outer court, for instance, of the great temple at Bhuvaneswar ; he can only look over the wall from a block of masonry set up for the purpose. In Telinga he is even unwelcome in the vicinity of some of the more sacred shrines. Thus I was consistently discouraged from visiting Drākshāram, one of the holiest, though I once passed close to it (without knowing) in the course of my duties, and lived for ten years not far away. The custom varies in this respect between temple and temple. The most liberal rule, observed in the Tamil country, admits a foreigner to the Court of the Gentiles. The excellent beauty of the Tamil temples, I suppose, has always attracted visitors, and they have thus learned the pleasure of being admired, especially if admiration is joined with an offering of silver. The Telinga temples, lacking intrinsic loveliness, treasure their seclusion the more dearly, even as among Muhammadans the ugliest women are said to be the most zealous to preserve the veil.

This consolation of the fox against the grapes does not apply to Bhuvaneswar, perhaps the most beautiful temple in India. It emphatically suits that of Dowlaishwaram, one of the meanest. Dedicated to Vishnu, it stands on a hill

above the river, and is approached by stone stairs like several shrines already described. The picturesque root of the hill, where strange boats are built and moored, and where the women of the village come to the river for water, and the devout for 'pure ablution,' was for many years a favourite haunt of mine. In my very last year in India it suddenly occurred to me, familiar by this time with so many nobler shrines, to ascend the stairs, not to see the temple, which quite obviously had no more architectural distinction than a wayside choultry, but to look out from its platform at the river. When we were two-thirds of the way up (an English friend, a mandarin of distinction, was with me), there was a frantic rush of hierodules to close the temple doors, and the priests, pouring out of their houses at the foot of the stair, came about us like bees, protesting at the sacrilege. We apologised for our transgression, and explained that we merely wanted to admire the view. The chief priest said it would cost them twenty rupees to clean the stairs of our contamination. He accepted, however, a rupee as a humble contribution to the cause. As we descended the stair he was roundly abused for this weakness by a body of sturdy shopkeepers and others who had by this time gathered in defence of the sanctuary. A scholar of mine, who had appeared out of one of the priest's houses, as naked and scriptural a figure for the nonce as they, worked bravely to allay the tumult. He was much more frightened (on our behalf) than we were ourselves, and warned us that we had run a serious risk of being knavishly beaten with staves. The fear of the pious shopkeepers seemed to be that the god would punish *them* for

acquiescing in the violation of his dignity ; apparently he could not be trusted to visit his displeasure directly upon the guilty parties, who were presumably beyond his jurisdiction. I have noticed at other times also that Vaisyas and Sudras are apt on occasion to be less accommodating, in their application of the ritual of exclusion, than their Brahmin instructors. A morose merchant of Rajahmundry once refused to allow me to enter his ornamental tabernacle at festival time (one was usually welcomed into such places pleasantly enough), reminding an indignant Brahmin friend of mine that I was after all no better than an outcast.

As an earlier anecdote may have already suggested, Englishmen in India themselves constitute a caste, less punctilious, perhaps, in detail, but hardly less exclusive in the main, than the indigenous associations. The stronghold of British ceremonial purity in the South is the Madras Club, spotless and solemn as a Doric temple in its temenos of banyan-groves. It is not so dangerous for a Brahmin (provided he drape his torso in an English coat and shirt) to walk into the Madras Club, as it would be for an Englishman to invade the temple of Juggernaut at Puri ; but the adventure, I am told, requires considerable nerve. I was unhappy enough to lose the friendship of a distinguished Indian professor as a result of the snubs to which he was subjected by his own countrymen (for the Indian underlings of the office are not the most conciliatory interpreters of the spirit of the place) while enquiring for me at the oracle of the club. Luckily the younger generation are stiffer in the cause of friend-

ship, or I should have suffered more serious loss. Once, after a ramble through picturesque Madras with a former disciple, I entertained him with a lime squash (not, as malicious Fame afterwards averred, with several whiskies and sodas) on one of the long verandahs that grace the front of the club hostelry. That same evening I learned by letter from the secretary that he had received several complaints about my habit (this was certainly not quite the first occasion) of entertaining my Indian friends on the club verandahs. He drew my attention to a mysteriously worded regulation, about the meaning of which I had often wondered. It was directed against behaviour tending 'to disturb the harmony of the club.' Apparently the reference was to the colour harmony.

I must bring to an end this review of diverting memories, lest my old acquaintance of the Indies, for whom I entertain a most affectionate and regretful regard, should say that I am taking an unfair opportunity to pay off old scores. Perhaps these random anecdotes will suggest more truth to the reader than a more formal treatise, on the small scale which is all I can afford, would give. One's impression is that caste in its unpleasanter aspects is breaking up as fast in India as elsewhere. Just at present perhaps there is a slight reaction in its favour, if I may judge from resolutions passed at college debating societies in 1919. This reaction is of a piece with the intense Hinduism which Ghandi preaches. But the redemption of the 'untouchables' is nevertheless a prominent feature of Ghandi's programme. Here at least the great

prophet has taken a hint from the 'unspiritual' West, and is working hand in hand with the railways and the great cities, the commercialism and the outside contact and the new learning which he abhors. Away from cities and the railway the spirit of caste is still strong. 'He would not have done that in our village!' laughed a young Brahmin with whom I was walking on Godavery bank, as an Atlantean washerman, with a round, blank world of washing on his shoulders, frightened the twice-born stripling from his path. In remote villages and small country towns there are still public thoroughfares where no 'untouchable' may walk. As an inspector of schools I have had to wink at the exclusion of Malas and Madigas (the Pariahs of Telingana) from state-aided primary schools in such localities; and where there was a separate school in the low-caste quarter I have taken unholy delight in dragging a reluctant Brahmin sub-assistant to inspect it. In the big high schools at urbaner Rajahmundry, on the other hand, there are free scholarships for low-caste boys. Railway travelling, of which Indians of all degrees are notably fond, necessitates many relaxations of caste rule. It has its own stringent three-caste system, indeed, but it ignores Manu. The individualist and plutocratic system of the West is rapidly replacing the old theocratic divisions in up-to-date Indian society. At present the interaction of the two, and the different values borne in the same person by the ignorant priest and the educated outcaste, the twice-born clerk and the foreign official or the rich Sudra politician, make an interesting study. Such a conflict of social values, no doubt,

has always existed in India, but hitherto theocracy has generally stood for culture and comparative progress ; now it is faced with a rival who denounces it, not without reason, as barbaric. It must always be remembered, however, that the extreme 'colours' of the Indian social spectrum are almost as diverse as Europe and Africa ; and we must not for the present expect India to exceed America in democratic faith.

When I was still of an age to believe that ideals were meant to be realised, I took part with certain yet younger Indians in the formation of a Society (itself perhaps rather inconsistently exotic) for the Protection of Local Colour. It was based, I fear, on ideas not altogether dissimilar from some of those now embodied in the gospel of Mr. Ghandi, which was not yet promulgated, or in Pierre Loti's *India Without the English*, which we had not read. Non-co-operation and racial hatred, however, were naturally no part of our scheme. We existed for the discouragement of such unromantic anomalies as the fashion among Indians of wearing stiff collars and European suits and boots, the use of oil-engines instead of oxen at the well-head, the employment of a hybrid music in marriage processions, and the still more degrading practice of dragging the bridegroom and his bride through the streets in a rusty growler instead of bearing them aloft in the glittering and poetic palankeen. Caste, I remember, was one of the subjects which gave us pause. Indeed, its rigid enforcement might have hampered our joint activities, since most of my associates were Brahmins.

Another cause of reservation was early marriage, for which

the South has been famous since the Indian Hercules, as Megasthenes relates, espoused his own daughter Pandæa when she was five years old. That, no doubt, was in the Golden Age, but South Indian women at this day are often mothers at fourteen. Now the members of our S.P.L.C. (as they were sworn never to describe themselves, the Western vice of talking in initials having taken alarming hold on the modern Indian), were for the most part also ardent social reformers, like all English-educated Indians, and one of the cardinal tenets of the Indian social reformer is the wickedness of early marriage. This furious conviction, it is true, has no effect upon the family policy of the reformers themselves, nor upon the age at which their children marry; for the decision in such matters lies on the knees of the women, and the women are not yet English-educated, and therefore not social reformers. On the other hand, they have instinctively constituted themselves into an immense informal Society for the Protection of Local Colour, which has hitherto been far more effective than any deliberate male enterprise of the kind is likely to be. Yet there are signs that the outworks even of this tremendous organisation, impervious to intellectual sophistries, are destined to be breached by the subtler demon of Western millinery fashion, which is as new to India as the goddess of influenza; and the sacred fort may fall even without the desperate expedient of educating the women, which sanguine philosophers prescribe. In the matter of early marriage, I began at last to suspect that the instinct of the women was wiser than the far-fetched theories of the men. I felt that our own way of ordering

these affairs was not so perfect that we could afford to set ourselves up as an example to others. I now find that Mr. Havelock Ellis, who knows more about such matters than I shall ever do, thinks that there is much to be said for early marriages, and that in sexual matters generally we have much to learn from the Hindus. I have read, moreover, that the mother of the Mogul Emperor Akbar, a fine figure of a man if ever there was one, was only fourteen when he was born. I see that Sarah Bernhardt's mother, in our own slow-ripening north, gave birth to that lively wonder at fifteen. Let us remember that Juliet Montague, *née* Capulet, was not fourteen when she died. It is true that she never lived, but I dare say that we should be sadly shocked if statistics were set before us showing from actual practice what our forefathers and foremothers considered a marriageable age. Here, in fact, as in the case of clothes, is a notable example of our barbaric habit of teaching for doctrine, and imposing upon others as essential morality, the conventions and even the corruptions induced in our own practice by special or accidental conditions, climatic or economic.

III

Marriages are as obtrusive and frequent in India as they seem to have been in the world before the flood, or as they are in the New Testament. The sight of their pageantry brings the background of the Gospels and parables wonderfully near to us; or else at the distant sound of them we seem to be

listening across the ages to the marriage-songs of Sappho. The privilege of attending such old-world entertainments, however briefly, was a source of great imaginative pleasure to me, and since I have described my only unfortunate adventure of the kind, it is only fair that I should record one out of innumerable happier examples. It was, I think, my first experience of an Indian marriage, and therefore left a vividder impression than most. It was also singular in being the only Tamil wedding (though in the Telugu country) that I ever attended. I have explained elsewhere that Tamils often occupy important posts in the Telugu country, and also that they preserve the comely ancient order more scrupulously than their Telinga neighbours. The letters which I wrote home during my first year in India, preserved in the family archives, contain an account, written at the time, of this pleasure (they are modestly silent, I notice, about that other entertainment, which belongs to the same period), and I am able, therefore, to recapture the sharper detail of the impression.

In company with an English lady, I was looking at old brasses at the house of an Aiyungar gentleman who was a connoisseur in such things. Being learned in all the wisdom of the West (and East), and highly Anglicised, he was accustomed to receive European visitors, and had made his domestic arrangements accordingly. He had just sold me 'two damsels of old brass bearing lamps, which I called Foolish Virgins.' (These *dipalakshmi*, or Lakshmi lamps, were a favourite form of old India handicraft.) Of one of

them, says the letter plaintively, 'Mrs. Z. browbeat me on the way home, I having foolishly boasted of its rarity.' I remember, however, that she afterwards gave it back to me, having reflected that it was too improper (looking at it now, I can't imagine why) to put in her drawing-room! Suddenly our host, with the superior detachment which men affect all over the world (or it may have been part of his English disguise), appeared to remember that he was celebrating a marriage in his house, or rather in a hired house opposite, his own not being big enough. He asked us whether we would like to look in upon it, and we said we certainly should.

'For about forty minutes of the twilight,' says the letter, 'we sat in the little courtyard, while the family went through the traditional games, dances and songs, which are almost as binding as the ceremony itself.' The last clause, I think, is an echo of the oral commentary supplied by our host himself. The place, as it lives in my memory, was not so much a courtyard as a kind of atrium with wooden pillars and a pavement of very smooth cement. The games and dances were simple, rather like those of our children's ring-games which are accompanied with song. One of them centred in a bowl containing some clear reddish liquid with a sediment, in which some divination was apparently to be read. 'The company were all of the family except ourselves, yet a great crowd, "more than the family of Queen Victoria,"' as a son of the house, a chatterbox of thirteen, informed us. There were four little brides to be married, two daughters of the house and two nieces. Even the bridegrooms were of the

family more or less, so closely do these Brahmins intermarry.

'As we entered the eight were sitting on a carpet, looking very weary, for these compulsory jollifications go on for almost a week with very little time for sleep. The brides wore *saris* of smouldering orange silk and gold. One of them was playing on an Indian harmonium and singing.' The Aiyungar women are famous for their beauty, but I remember thinking that the bridegrooms were prettier than the brides. With heads clean-shaven to the topknot, they 'squatted opposite like young yogins, each clad in a delicate crocus cloth of many folds, which left the arms and shoulders bare. I was quite shocked presently to hear them speak students' English: this one was reading in the Engineering College at Trichy, that one in the V form at Vizag, etc. Then only I recognised them as the likes of the boys of the first-year class at Rajahmundry.' I never again saw that beautiful crocus raiment of the bridegroom at a wedding. It was clearly the correct primitive mode, but the Telinga Niyogi bridegrooms (may their gods forgive them!) prefer a silken shirt of modern cut. 'The youngest of the brides,' continues the record, 'came to show Mrs. Z. her silks, her bangles, her tiny nose jewel, the flower and the great golden ornament in her hair. Poor little girl, eleven years, and much too tired to be vain or frightened! Everyone was very polite, though I fancied that the Brahmin mother (stepmother to the bride, and the comeliest woman there) a little resented this intrusion of barbarians, especially when she was introduced to Mrs. Z. Western ideas are moving

the men, but the women are firm as a rock under sand. You would think our host was an Englishman or a Frenchman to hear him talk: he professes to loathe caste-rules, child-marriage, all the paraphernalia and expense of Hindu ceremony, yet here he is dragged through it all, to the tune of 5,000 Rs. and endless worry, by the caste, the family, the wife, and the mother-in-law. Curiously, the old people, grandmothers and remoter forebears, were quite good-tempered and beaming.'

This account, of course, represents only a short hour of the various and crowded bridal week. At other times one enters to find a dance of the dancing-girls afoot, or the whole company goes forth to follow the bridal palankeen with torches and music and a dance of the same hirelings.

Such are the tantalising glimpses of those hallowed 'reserves of antiquity' which are all that a foreigner can ever hope to achieve. Of the actual tying of the sacred knot, and other mystic passages of the sacramental core of the rite, we can only learn by hearsay, for none but the twice-born may witness them. I am reminded especially of a friend already quoted, whose delightful talk has often made such scenes pass before me so vividly that I sometimes feel as if I had actually seen them. It so happens that he lately sent me in a letter a complete and surely a unique account of a Niyogi wedding, as it was actually celebrated in an Agraharam or Brahmin village of the Krishna delta in the Western year (as I compute it) 1903. It occurs to me that I could not do better than give it here, 'pending sanction,' substantially as it stands, with all its

poetry of ancient Aryan ritual and pleasant rural superstition, and the universal sense of tears and laughter ; its music and fragrance and colour and feeling at once so pure and rich, so old and yet so fresh, so remote and yet at times so poignantly near to us and familiar. I trust that the guests at my visionary marriage-feast (I refer to the marriage-section of my chapter as a whole) will forgive my lack of masterly foresight and direction in having ' kept the good wine until now.'

A Brahmin Wedding

' My eldest sister's wedding,' writes my friend, ' took place when I was a boy of six years. My cousin Subbamma, the daughter of my uncle, was married at the same time. My family was then in the legal state, so much praised by lovers of the past, of the joint family. It was the first time for my father and uncle to perform any such important ceremony. My father was a good earning member, and our prosperity was then in the ascending stage. The brothers, therefore, had very grand ideas of celebrating the occasion.

' Both my sister and my cousin assumed very grave demeanours. Only two days previously they had been solemnly " promoted brides." All the ladies of the village were invited, and the brides to be were seated on a kind of low seat called " peetam," and were presented with " hārati," or the " flame of prosperity "—an honour which is accorded to the gods, as well as to the principal mortal persons concerned, at the end of every joyful ceremony. They were also given betel, and

some gram. The distribution of gram by ladies among ladies is considered an auspicious and honourable formality. After this function my sisters (you have noticed that we often call our first cousins also brothers and sisters) were allowed to wear on their brows the "kalyānam bottu," or sacred marriage mark, a figure of Shiva's trident made in vermillion. The "dot of modesty" was also applied to their left cheeks. My sister smiled whenever anyone addressed her as "bride." Once I went up to her and cried suddenly, "Sister, here's brother-in-law!" My sister hastily rose and stood there, as the Hindu woman is taught to do in the presence of her husband. We all had a laugh at her expense.

'I rose early on the great day, hearing that the parties of the bridegrooms would be coming in an hour. I waited and waited but no party came, nor did I hear the sound of the bridegroom's trumpet. Many relations had arrived with their families, and the front wing or "mansion" of the house was packed full of people. A big pandal or timber portico had been erected between this mansion and the back one. All round the main building also pandals had been erected. The front one was pleasantly decorated with canopies of painted cloth and festoons of evergreen and other leaves. Even in the street also a big pandal had been erected.

'It was five in the evening when the far-off note of the crooked trumpet announced the arrival of the expected parties. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Immediately there was a great commotion. Our big fort of a house was the scene of children's cries, the laughter of maidens, women's explana-

tions and old women's admonitions. Everyone flocked into the courtyard at the sound of a pipe, for word had been brought that the two parties had come to the other side of the canal. The country music of the band sounded nearer and nearer, and the trumpet blared forth its summons to the parties of the brides.

'We' started out with a few musicians, carrying sweet drinks for the visitors. We found them at the hospice. The two bridegrooms were sitting like two crowned young princes on two pials, one on each. My brother-in-law had a big turban, and looked imposing enough.

'We welcomed them heartily, and requested them to come to their prepared lodging. The bands struck up and off we started, the bridegrooms in their respective palanquins. There were two parties of dancing-girls. One of these parties was rather a good one.

'When the visitors had been comfortably settled in their allotted quarters, they were invited to dinner. It is a point of courtesy for each member to be separately invited, but if the head of the party is willing they may be invited in a body, and this concession was now granted. Chaffing them for not having yet acquired the tyrannous airs of the true "bridegroom's party" (it is part of the game that the bridegroom's party should be very much on its dignity) we brought them to the dinner.

'It was after midnight when we finished, and then almost everyone went to bed to snatch some sleep before the auspicious nuptial hour, which was at half-past four in the morning.

My father, uncle, mother and aunt, with some important persons like my father's sister, did not sleep at all.

'At three o'clock the "wry-neck'd fife" awakened us from our slumbers. Again there was hubbub. The wedding procession approached our house. The grooms were conducted into the inner apartments, presented with the flame of prosperity, and given an oil bath. They put on silken cloths and sat on the "vedicas" or marriage pials, which are only four inches high. Ancient canticles and spells (*mantram*) were spoken, calling a forgotten world to witness: "Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Kambhoja, Kasmira, Sindhu, Barbara, Yavana" ran the familiar catalogue of immemorial realms.* The genealogies of the brides and bridegrooms were recited by their respective chaplains (*purohit*). There was a goodly throng of [ceremonial] Brahmins present, and the hymns rose high in rich bass voices like a single voice. The fathers performed the Kanyadanam, the ceremony of giving away their daughters, while the mothers poured water over their husbands' hands, which were held just above the right hands of the bridegrooms. Then amid the din of trumpets, drums and pipes, the bridegrooms tied the sacred knots around the necks of the brides, and put the sacred vermilion on the knots.

'The wedding was performed, but the ceremony was not yet complete. The brides and bridegrooms poured the sacred

* Anga, Bengal, Kalinga, Cambodia, Cashmir, the Barbarians' country, Ionia—it would be interesting to know the date of this geographical fragment.

rice over each other's heads. Then the pairs were conducted to the room of Agni, the Sacred Fire. Before Agni the marriage vows were sealed.

'The whole village had been invited for the five days' feast of morning and evening meals. Just before the dinner-time there must be a second call, and everyone has to wait for everyone who has promised to come, and all these together have to wait for the bridegroom's party. So did we. After each meal betel was distributed. There was singing of songs and poems on divine subjects, and all chanted in chorus the dinner-time cry, *Narāyana*, or *Govindā*, or *Hara Harā*.^{*} There were many kinds of prepared foods, and the "big-bellied Brahmins" were in their own element. Ghee (clarified butter) was extravagantly expended. The bridegrooms' parties always came with pipe and drum, and went in the same way. When anybody of either party went to the others' lodging he was given betel and sprinkled with rose-water, and his scarf smeared with attars.

'The third day was that on which presents were given to the Brahmins according to their merit. Lists were prepared, and the Brahmins went bustling to the visitors' chaplains with recommendations from our own chaplain. All the first-class people, those that had the Veda by heart, or had read *Vyakaranam* (grammar) and so on, were presented with cloths and fruits. All the others were given money according to their degree, two rupees or one, or a half, or a quarter. Five hundred

^{*} Names of Vishnu and Krishna.

people or more were honoured in this way. Little boys claimed full wages. Some of the Brahmins began to quarrel and claim that their merit should have been allowed to weigh more. All these were put into a closed hall with a single door, where stood the donors, with some auxiliaries. "Here, sirs, is Brahma Sri Venkata Shastri Garu * of Viravasaram!" cries our self-important chaplain. "He is a very great Pundit, honoured in Utlam.' The visitors' chaplains merely nod their heads. "Very well: give him one." A bright silver coin is thrust into the Shastri's hand, and he is whisked away out of the gate, protesting all the while, "No, no, I won't take one; it is an insult; you may have it back!"—but at the same time thrusting the rupee into his waist with a peculiar movement. All the people here who wear no shirt have a special method of thrusting money into their waistcloth, where it is very secure.

' That night the dancing-girls performed some dramas in the old-fashioned way. Their ordinary dances were given every day. On the evening of the fourth day there was a big assembly (*sabha*) at which there was presented what is called a Hari-katha, a recital of the story of some sacred personage, illustrated with songs, poems and dancing. There was a great lamp in one corner, and the two dancing parties. It was a very grand assembly in our house. Camphor pills and sticks of incense were distributed among the guests, after the

* His personal name was Venkata (a local name of Vishnu). Brahma Sri is the correct honorific of a Brahmin. Shastri is a title applied to those learned in the shastra's or ancient scientific treatises. Garu is the Telugu equivalent of 'Mister.' The Rev. Mr. So-and-So, M.A.

usual sprinkling with rose-water and smearing of attar. Every day there had been processions, but the procession on the fourth night was the grandest of all. So many torches of castor oil, so many torches of dried cocoanut, and so many torches of kerosine oil ; rows on rows, clusters upon clusters. There were strings of paper lamps, twinkling red, blue, yellow, green and orange ; there were big toy trees made of pith, and great fans of palmyra ; there was a blaze of fireworks, the roar of the drums, the squeal of the fifes. At each and every house the procession stopped, so that people might see the bride and bridegroom seated in the palanquin together. Whenever the procession stopped in front of a house, there the dancing-girls danced and sang their :

“ Give me one kiss, O my lord, only one kiss, if you please.

I know the cause of my lord's anger.

For he has fallen into the clutches of the vile Chitra. . . . ”

‘ At four o'clock on the morning of the fifth day the last sacrifice was offered to Agni and the couples put off the state of sanctitude, or *diksha*. While they are in *diksha* they must remain in the same clothes, they may not bathe, nor eat betel, nor may their heads be touched with razor or scissors ; and so on.

‘ The last ceremonies of the wedding were done on this day. Each pair was made to sit on a cot, and they were made to carry on a mock conversation, couched as though they were already well-advanced in life and had children. “ Here, dear, take this child, for I have to fetch water from the well.” “ Yes,

but do you now take this crying boy, for I have to look after my fields, or my business." "Now I have to cook the meals, who will take this child?" "Here am I, sister-in-law," cried the sisters of the bridegrooms, and they had the sandalwood dolls for themselves.

'Then the two brides were lifted by two stout Brahmins and the bridegrooms by two others. The dancing-girls stood in rows with plates full of coloured flour. The strain of the music was changed to a dancing measure, and the brides took handfuls of the flour and threw it in the faces of the bridegrooms, who did likewise. One mischievous bridegroom threw some flour at one of the dancing-girls. Meanwhile the Brahmins who carried the brides and bridegrooms were dancing in a fantastic way, and when the young couples were throwing the coloured flour at each other a general *mêlée* of flour-throwing began among us for sport. Then was there running, hiding, and all sorts of fun, and even the women were not spared. There was a general atmosphere of heart-easing laughter.

'Later in the fifth day, however, everything is gloomy. The joy of the festival vanishes. The mother was crying in a corner, because her daughter was to be taken away. After the business of the flour-throwing the parting ceremony took place, which was rather pathetic. We exchanged parting gifts, which mostly consisted of cloths, and the visitors took leave of us. I followed the party as far as the big canal. When I found that they would not take me with them, do you know what I did? I fell to acrying and rolled on the ground there,

and continued to do so till I was found by a banyan friend of my father and taken home.'

EXPLICIT A.B.

The marriage-feast is almost the only form of general social entertainment which the Hindus in a middle way of life allow themselves ; but since families are usually large, and every child is married at least once (the girls never more than once, but a man always re-marries if his wife should die) ; and since all the relations and friends of both parties attend the festival, it affords a more adequate substitute than might at first be supposed for our own dinners and dances and house-parties and the like, so that a well-connected and popular young person of social tastes may attend half a dozen such functions in a summer and be satisfied. The amount of money spent on a marriage-feast would seem to us to be out of all proportion to the usual expenditure of the household. The old-fashioned Indian lives very simply. In the year before the war thirty rupees or two pounds a month was considered enough to keep a middle-class family without want, and though a man was not 'passing rich on forty pounds a year,' he was not uncomfortably poor. Of course, money went further than it did in England, but not so much further as these figures would lead one to expect. I am a poor economist, but I should guess that even at English prices an Indian would spend on shelter, food and clothing less than a quarter of the sum spent by an Englishman of corresponding status. No doubt he sometimes loads his wife with jewellery, but such furniture, unlike English frocks,

incidentally represents a safe investment, of which his wife draws only the interest in the form of vanity.

But over a marriage the very life-blood of the family estate is poured out like water. The sacrifice is made by all grades of society alike. A low-caste peon or orderly, who used to wait on me at a salary of ten or twelve rupees, or much less than a pound a month, wrote to me recently to suggest a contribution toward a double marriage which he was about to celebrate in his house, and upon which he proposed to spend (he had already borrowed the money) a sum of seven hundred rupees—perhaps forty times his official monthly pay. He may have idealised the figure, and there are other considerations which make it unsafe to treat this example as an exact means of measurement, but it shows the generous scale upon which these entertainments are conceived even in humble circles. The rich man extravagates proportionately.

It is said that early marriages among youths are hastened by the desire of the eldest living generation to see its posterity married before it passes away, for marriage is conventionally regarded by the Hindus as the summit of human happiness. In the case of the girls, as far as real marriage and motherhood are concerned (for the chief solemnity itself, though irrevocable, is in effect rather a betrothal than a marriage), the choice of time is not left in human hands. Indian morality prescribes that as soon as the conditions exist which make physically possible the bringing of another life into the world, the occasion is to be seized with all speed, or the parties concerned are

guilty of a worse crime than murder. This curious anxiety seems inconsistent with the very poor opinion of earthly life which Indian religion teaches, until we remember that even in India religion is not intended to be taken quite seriously, and that while, as with us, it rails against the world, the flesh, and the devil, it counts on them to correct its own extravagances.

It will be seen that Indians are traditionally as anxious to replenish the earth as ever the Indian Noah can have been when he came out of the ark ; yet even Indians are perhaps gradually being driven to feel that a new age, or Kalpa, has dawned upon the world, which demands other forms of virtue than its predecessor ; and that God may fulfil Himself in other ways than by indefinite multiplication.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRINGE OF THE JUNGLE

I

THE stay-at-home hears about India chiefly from the hunters, and I now wish to show how my tamer Indian world relates to theirs, by saying something of Big Game. In serving the reader with my own inferior substitute for a highly popular literary dish, I feel rather like smooth Jacob dressed in skins. I never myself killed anything bigger than a hare (and some hares take a lot of killing). The nastiest experience I ever had with a wild beast was when a rat got inside my mosquito-curtain at night and persisted in sitting on my head, and 'mingling with my dream.' Still, like the young man who was asked whether he played the piano, and who replied, 'No, but my sister does,' I can at least boast that many of my friends were Nimrods. I lived long in the neighbourhood of doughty deeds. I am a little jealous for the honour of the region where I lived, for I feel that I carry some of its reflected glory.

Late one evening in a lovely valley of Cashmir an army doctor from the Punjaub stumbled into my camp in a state

of considerable excitement because, after enduring labours worthy of Sven Hedin, he had been persuaded by his shikari that he had very nearly shot a leopard. I reflected complacently that in *our* part of the world even a peaceful person like myself could achieve the same distinction with comparative ease.

For many years I nursed a mild desire to shoot a leopard. I did not thirst for the blood of the beast, but I wanted its handsome skin; and in Telingana, where leopard-skins are a common adornment of parlour walls, a young man does not usually exhibit the spoils of wild animals that he has not personally vanquished. Against the local tigers I cherished no design, though I would willingly have watched them at their moonlight play in the jungle, as it has often been vividly described to me. Why I never achieved either of these ambitions there was more than one reason besides ill-fortune.

In the first place I was a pedagogue, and pedagogues in India seldom annoy wild animals. It is not a part of their *dharma*. The reason is not wholly temperamental. Englishmen in India somewhat resemble the kings in the history books. One reads that they founded this, and enacted that, and lost the other in the wash. Literally speaking, they probably did none of these things. It would be truer to say that the establishment did them. In India this qualification applies to acts as far apart as the submission of an administrative report and the slaughter of a tiger. I shall be told, not without reason, that I am merely giving myself away. I shall be reminded of what the Queen of Hearts said in the play, that

'it is the artist's part, to put the jam correctly in the tart.' These suggestions, however, like the work for which they plead, are merely incidental refinements of the fundamental fact. In my early years in India a young engineer who had only been a few months in the country, and who knew even less than I did of tiger-shooting, went up the river for a short spell of inspection duty, full of zeal to kill tigers in his spare time. When he walked into the club ten days later we asked him ironically how many tigers he had bagged. He replied that he had killed two, both over nine feet long. He had laid an enemy low with each barrel, Bom, Bom, like the Corsican hero in *Colomba*. We had all the details before we realised that his answers were not as ironical as our enquiries. Now I would not enviously detract from his glory, but I maintain that if that particular slayer thought he slew those fine beasts, he was deluded. Rather were they the victims of a long conspiracy, in which, not to speak of the designers and makers of his rifle, and the men who expounded the mysteries of 'sitting over a kill' to him, the various underlings who found out where the tigers were, and wove the platform in the tree for my friend to sit on, were collectively far more essential to the matter than he was himself. No doubt if his stars and the moon had not helped him, he might have spoiled it all by shooting wide, but in that case history would not have heard of the matter at all. Now engineers and policemen and others whose business leads them into the wilds generally have about the office some duffadar or peon whose unofficial qualification it is to know,

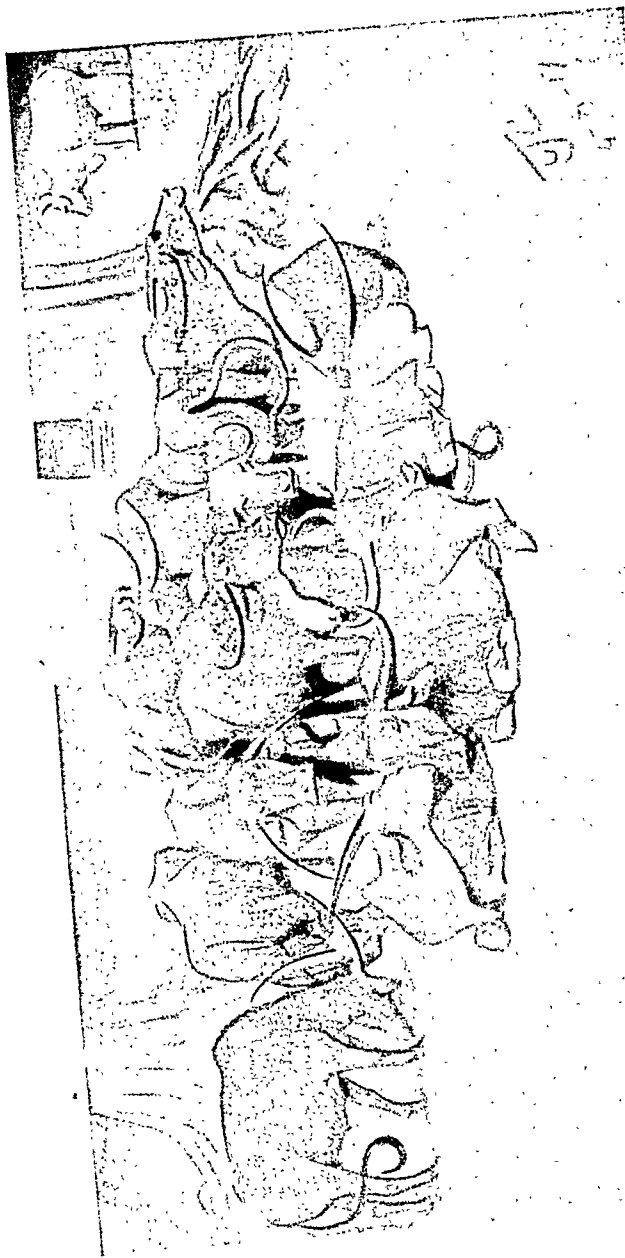
or to know those who know, where game is to be found. Educational men have few peons, and those, like their masters, men of peace. My most enterprising peon, I believe, was a washerman after hours. That is one reason why I never killed my leopard.

I must admit, however, that cowardice had something to do with it. I was not afraid of the leopards (for unless one is an old hand or a dead shot one takes few risks in that quarter), but of their little neighbour the malarial mosquito. In India fever is rife wherever Nature is most beautiful, and wherever game is most plentiful; that is, in the jungles of the foothills. Those whose duties take them into such parts get fever anyhow, but others think twice before they venture to watch all night in a malarial jungle, for malaria, once caught, is not easily lost again. A military man, new to the country, once told me that he had news of a tiger in the Vizag Agency, and was going out for the week-end after it. 'You may or may not get your tiger,' I told him, 'but you'll certainly catch malaria.' He said he would rather get both than neither, and he got both. That is the temper that slays tigers.

Even the men of action, of course, do not often have the luck of the young engineer above cited. Many collectors and colonels (the collector is a great officer with a mean title) have prayed for years only to see the things that he saw, and have not seen them. Leopards are fairly easily bagged, but tigers are harder to come at. In this, as in other matters, the luck of the tyro is proverbial, mainly because it excites surprise and is reported. A Ceylonese gentleman in the Civil Service, who was

my neighbour for some months, took with him into the Agency (the wilder country up the river) a nephew of his, a lad still in his teens and full of enthusiasm, who had learned to use the rifle at school. They had not been many weeks in the wilds when the youth, in his uncle's absence, got news of a leopard. He had a small ring-fence made, tied a kid (I think) in front of it, and sat up at night. A nine-foot tiger came and peered into his rifle. This was a breach of etiquette, as the entertainment was only prepared for a leopard. Hunters always aver that a leopard is more dangerous than a tiger, but this, I think, is merely a prudential exaggeration, for I noticed that they always sit in a big tree to shoot tigers at night, not on the ground, as they will for leopards. Nevertheless, the tiger being there, the young man fired, smashing its shoulder. A tiger wounded in the dark is supposed to charge the flash, and a hunter of experience, who examined the tracks next day, told me that he could only account for the fact that the frail barricade was not rushed, by supposing that the injury to the shoulder swung the tiger awry.

The next morning the wounded beast was located in a patch of jungle. A herd of buffaloes was driven into the patch. They winded the tiger, and were after him at once with outstretched noses like a pack of hounds. When the hunters came up with them they were standing with bowed heads in a ring round the tiger, which was striking at them over their great horns with his one unwounded foreleg. The young man with the rifle climbed a tree to shoot over the buffaloes' backs. Meanwhile a villager, excited with arrack, prodded the



tiger between the legs of the buffaloes with a spear which he had tied to the end of a long bamboo. The tiger, in spite of its wound, came at him right over the backs of the buffaloes. Luckily its attention was distracted by one of the buffaloes, which it seized by the hind leg. The buffalo dragged it in the direction of the tree where the rifleman stood, and the rifleman shot it dead.

Such are the tales they tell in Telingana on the verandah after dinner. This was the first I heard as news, and at first-hand. I had ridden and shot with the people concerned, and shared their anticipations of more exciting adventure. The tale has therefore remained clear in my mind, whereas all the rest have now become confused one with another, so that I could not recite them if I would. Also I liked the part played by the buffaloes. I never heard again at first-hand of the use of this device, though I read of it lately in a book dealing, as it happened, with this very locality in an earlier decade.

Such adventures were commonly encountered near the Ghauts, twenty miles up the river, or in the undeveloped country beyond, known as the Agency, because it was governed by the District Collector in a special capacity as Government Agent. Forest, however, came down from the hills as far as Rajahmundry, and in the cool weather leopards sometimes temporarily did so too. In my time a cheetah, a sort of dog-leopard, was actually shot in a house in the town by a young Eurasian with a shot-gun. More than once a leopard was reported in the maize-field by my house, and calves were taken from farms further east, but I somehow never got on

the spoiler's track with a rifle: 'never the time and the place and the loved one altogether,' as far as I was concerned, though the prize was usually bagged by somebody.

Once the duffadar of my Civilian neighbour, mentioned above, came to me, his master being on a journey, with news of a leopard six miles up the trunk road toward the north. This time I was able to borrow a rifle—a tremendous double-barrelled bombard which the lender assured me would put a leopard out of action if it caught only the end of his tail. I was inclined to believe him, judging from the hole it made at forty yards in a palmyra-bole which I shot to see if I could stand the kick of the charge. Thus armed I started off betimes up the road in a bullock-bandy, having first sent a wire to the Collector for permission to shoot in the Reserved Forest, whither I was bound. Such forests are divided by long, narrow, and perfectly straight lanes, in the sandy floor of one of which I was duly shewn the fresh spoor of my quarry. Indian shikaris are shameless fabricators of evidence, and I was no connoisseur of leopard's pads, but as a fellow-artist, though in other mediums, I was certainly not easy to deceive in this particular, though deceived I may have been. The daffadar's arrangements seemed otherwise to have considerably miscarried, for most of the villagers had gone off to work in the fields, and I could only collect about a dozen men as beaters—a quite inadequate muster. I determined, however, to put them through the square of scrub in which the leopard appeared to have taken refuge. I took up my position with the headman and the daffadar in one of the lanes, commanding a range of half a mile or more. The

daffadar, a thorough sportsman, carried my Webley-Fosbury revolver. He was pleasantly excited, and prepared for emergencies.

That long and uneventful perspective in the scrub, thus anxiously scrutinised, while the howls of the beaters, presumably driving the leopard before them, drew nearer and nearer, was itself, for an imaginative novice, worth going forth into the wilderness for to see. It was all I personally saw, though both the headman and the daffadar declared that several head of deer and a wild boar (I think) were driven across the lane. I am in a position, therefore, to testify to the truth of the tales one reads about the marvellous eyesight of the Indian shikari; for as a painter, I am naturally unwilling to admit that these simple folk had the advantage of me in imaginative vision.

If the leopard was really as near as he seemed, it was doubtless rather dangerous for a tyro like myself to provoke him in the open. In the excitement of the beat I was not consciously aware of the danger, and I was rather surprised to find, as I ate my lunch later in the forest beside a pool afflush with lotuses, that my predominant feeling was not the disappointment of the luckless hunter, but a lively sense of the gladness of being alive. The man who had lent me the rifle—a lay trustee of the Anglican community—was about the same hour urgently summoned home by wire to conduct a funeral, and he wondered at once, he said, whether the leopard had after all prevailed. Altogether the pard in question unconsciously afforded healthy excitement and harmless amusement to a number of people on that pleasant November morning. Incidentally, I

was able to consider myself excused the necessity of paying the ten rupees which the Collector wanted to charge me for the privilege of shooting in the Reserved Forest.

I used to go up the river as far as the hills whenever I had a convenient opportunity, which happened on the average about once a year. Sometimes an engineer or a magistrate would be taking a Government steamer up to the Agency just when a Hindu (or Muhammadan or Christian) holiday happened to eke out a College week-end. At other times, as in spring, when the shoals were too many for the steamer, we would borrow an officer's staff-boat from the head-works at Dowlaishwaram and make the journey as best we could with sail and oar and quanting-pole. This was the pleasantest method, but slow and uncertain, so that one seldom had time to do more than peer into the gorges and return. I took only binoculars and a shot-gun, as one did not expect to shoot anything fiercer than a green pigeon in the course of the short excursions into the forest which were all that one had time for. The river itself abounded with duck, which were at some seasons marvellously tame, having been accustomed only to peaceful traders and raftsmen and happy boatloads of pilgrims bound for the Bhadrachalam temple, so that the prow of our fatal staff-boat pushed right among them before they would rise from the water to be shot at. Sometimes one saw from afar a crocodile at the water's edge, sometimes a drinking peacock. Out of the great screen of woods which the hills held up like a piled curtain about the river one caught now and again the far-off bark of

a deer or the roar of Hanuman, as the natives there style the black-faced monkey ; but I never caught sight of the beasts themselves, and there was plenty to observe and admire without lying in wait for these to kill them, for what people in a hurry call the ' scenery ' of the region was grand in the extreme. Only verse will give the pulse of it :

Sheer from the coronet-crag of the steep fall the woods to the water,
Soft from the forest-lock'd meadow the valleys retire ;
Green goes the paraquet-cry on the wall of green boughs, and the
peacock

Thrills on the dark-running stream, a cerulean fire.

Fable of ogre and gryphon yet clings to the pendulous antre,
Whisper'd enchantment of song in the dim forest-boughs
Breathes of old hero and sage, and what swift separation of lovers
Lurks in the delicate shade of the tamarind-close.

And fair and far shine the girdles of sand at the gate of the gorges,
Edging with anklet of silver its guardian isles,
Tall isles pontifical, mitred with towers, and the capes of the woodland.
O be it mine once again, by the morn's early smiles,

Mine to behold yet again those twin janitor-isles, and the tranquil
Blue thread of smoke from the holts, and the mountains behind !
While down thy dawn-whiten'd margins, Godavery, thy saints are
praying,

Thou to this prayer of a stranger, O River, be kind !

So the writer of these memories was moved to sing when
he first sailed through the mountain fourteen years ago ; and
the River-mother inclined her ear, and granted his petition.*

* There are two references in my ' effusion,' written in the first enthusiasm of Indian contact, which will not be obvious to English readers. The allusion at the end of the second verse here printed is to the abduction of Rama's wife Sita by the demon-king of Lanka, which is supposed to have occurred in the forests of the upper Godavery when the hero was sojourning there in exile near the hermitage of the sage Agastya. In the last verse the temple-crowned islands are compared to the two mitred janitors which guard the gate of a South Indian temple.

Almost on the last occasion when the boon was vouchsafed the returning travellers touched, just opposite the further of those twin janitor-isles, at a village of which the inhabitants were at that time grievously pestered by a leopard, which they implored the Englishman to shoot for them. The beast came, they said, almost every other night, and sometimes on two following nights, and always carried off a prey, either a calf, or a goat, or a dog. It had grown exceeding bold, and on the night before our arrival had killed and carried away a calf which the headman had tied to his own bedstead for safety. I was shewn the pool of blood on the ground beside the cot.

At first I honestly tried to excuse myself. I was anxious to be in Rajahmundry early on the following morning, and the chance did not seem good enough to wait for. The moon, the hunter's lantern, was hardly turned past the first quarter. The return of the leopard on the very next night was doubtful. I also pointed out that I had only a shot-gun with me. The headman said promptly that he could borrow a rifle from a zamindar across the river. Indian villagers do not always mean what they say, but this one, as I soon discovered, was in deadly earnest, and desperately anxious for me to stay and shoot. He even dared to suspect the genuineness of my pressing engagement elsewhere, and offered to shoot the beast himself if only I would wait and sit up with him. This was not, as might hastily have been supposed, a touching instance of the confidence inspired by the presence of a member of the ruling race. It merely meant that in the opinion of the poor villager the zamindar's agent would never

lend him the rifle for his own use, but might be willing, out of snobbery, to lend it for the use of an English official. Finally, therefore, I had no option but to undertake the immemorial duty of the aristocrat, and do my inadequate best to rid the villagers of their tormentor.

The weapon was brought with a promptness astonishing to anyone acquainted with Indian ways. It was a solid and curious engine, a Winchester, I believe, dated 1877, but apparently well looked after. The second barrel was curiously placed—can it have been under the other?—and the weapon was to be loaded through a little trap-door in the side, which somehow reminded me of the window in the Ark. I was given three cartridges, which were said to be all that the zamindar's armoury contained.

The leopard was in the habit of coming along a sandy lane which led from the village into the forest. Beside this lane, well away from the village, was the school, a simple white-washed building with a verandah. It was arranged that a kid should be tied up outside the further end of the school, and that I should sit inside and shoot the leopard through the window. The aperture was provided with iron bars, so that the arrangement which had obtained between myself and all the leopards I had hitherto seen was to be reversed.

The position was inglorious, but it saved trouble and looked eminently safe—a consideration not to be despised in view of my unproven armament and shortage of ammunition. What would have happened if I had merely wounded the leopard and been left with a single cartridge to finish the job

withal, I do not like to think. It is a point of honour to follow up a wounded feline as a public danger, and all the accidents of which I had ever heard had happened during this part of the proceedings. The contingency seemed likely enough under the conditions, and I could only hope that if it occurred we might be able to extort another dole of cartridges from the armoury across the river.

The chief immediate difficulty concerned the lighting arrangements. I spent the afternoon trying to invent a device which would enable me to take aim in the dark. I had heard of a practice of affixing a visiting-card cut in a V-shape to the foresight, but all my attempts to realise the idea looked unhelpful, and I gave them up. The headman wanted to tie a lantern to the post at which the kid was tethered, saying that a relation of his had shot a leopard in this way, but I was not persuaded. When I finally took up my position I found that, as the space before the window was bathed in faint moonlight, while the room in which we sat was pitch-dark, the polished barrel of the rifle reflected the outside radiance and was therefore practically invisible against it. Such are the trials of pedagogues who lie in wait for leopards.

Nevertheless, for nearly four hours we sat at that ridiculous schoolroom window as good as gold, and as uncomfortable as yogins, wearily nursing the means of judgment against the spoiler. The innocent kid in front of us, vaguely distressed by the darkness and exposure, was for a long time restless, and bleated as winsomely as we could wish, but finally composed herself to sleep, and had to be aroused by means of the

string which we had tied to her leg for the purpose. Presently the string came off, and I had to creep out and tie it on again, wondering whether the leopard would mistake me for a part of the bait. Hope sprang eternal in our inhuman bosoms, only to wither again as fast as it grew for lack of encouragement. Just as the little moon was deserting us a sudden intuition, confirmed by the cry of a jungle bird along the lane, convinced us all, in spite of four hours of continuous disappointment, that the leopard was at last approaching. Even the poor little victim, which had finally been allowed, in sheer pity, to go comfortably to sleep, woke up of her own accord and began to cry out piteously, and to strain at the tether. Whether the leopard was really in the lane I never knew, for at that moment there was a burst of barbaric music from the village behind us, spent gleams of torchlight mingled with the fading phosphorescence of the moonlight without the window, and we knew that our vigil had been in vain. That 'boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,' the climax of a rustic marriage-feast, if it did not scare away the leopard as well as our hopes of him, at least afforded us an excuse for retiring with a firm belief that we had come near to glory, a consummation of which the headman, as the real author of the enterprise, was perhaps, in the absence of a more positive result, secretly as glad as we were ourselves; for the expectations of everyone concerned, except perhaps the kid's, had been slowly but surely humbled in the course of that uncomfortable vigil. I hope the reader's disappointment at the recital is no more painful than mine was at the time, which a sense of extreme

physical relief almost obliterated as I retired to my cabin in the boat, and dreamed that I vanquished in single combat a fine bull yali, a monster compounded by the South Indian fancy out of the worst features of the lion and the elephant.

I hope I have not failed to suggest that playing at leopard-shooting may be a diverting pastime, even when one bags nothing more substantial than the atmosphere. Of the more active pursuit of deer, boar, bison and bear in their native thickets I have nothing to tell at first-hand. In default of such fare I propose to eke out this chapter with a few remarks on a subject which has at least this much in common with the theme which I have here inadequately attempted, that some treatment of it is usually expected of the returned Anglo-Indian; I mean the subject of snakes.

II

I once met a man who had lived four years in Madras city without ever having seen a poisonous snake. I was surprised at this, because the European quarter of Madras is a region of pleasantly informal parks and ancient banyans, where one may meet the hare by moonlight, and often hear the cry of the jackal, whose winding highway is the estuary of the Coombe river. Almost anywhere up country such a long inexperience of the serpent race would be quite impossible. In my garden at Rajahmundry I have encountered from time to time almost all the commoner varieties, poisonous and otherwise. In spite of considerable application, I always found it hard to remember their distinctive heraldries, but

one learns after a time to recognise the principal types. I admired especially the Russell's viper, a very dangerous reddish dragon about four feet long, sumptuously spotted with dark rings like a leopard; its appearance was recorded twice in ten years among the portents of the garden. Once I found a krait, a very delicate nocturne (if not a dirge) in black and silver, asleep on the white wall of the upper chamber where I slept. Snakes are supposed never to climb a stair, and one expected to be safe from them in an upper storey. This one must have come by way of the mango-tree whose leaves overlapped the verandah roof.

The krait is the second aspect of the infernal trinity of the snaky creed at which I duly learned to shudder; the cobra being the third, or rather the first. The ringed viper is dangerous by reason of her sluggishness, but the slender krait is agile and aggressive. I once met one advancing fiercely against me across an open lane of jungle sand. Fortunately seen in time, for it was hissing angrily, it was a pathetic little figure of dauntless devilry. That was the only time I was ever attacked by a snake, as it was the last time that particular snake attacked a man. Let me return, however, to my domestic almanac.

One evening I returned from the club to be greeted upon the verandah steps by an agitated major-domo with a basket containing at least half a dozen segments of what I presently gathered (literally) to have been a particularly fine naga or cobra. This being (I always think of snakes as at once more and less than mere animals) had been brought to bay in a

corner of my dressing-room, where it had so frightened the servants that after vainly trying to kill it with staves—a difficult matter owing to the strategic position of the snake—the butler in despair had actually dared ‘to unsettle and wield’ that jovian thunderbolt, his master’s twelve-bore. He had fired about eight cartridges before he had settled that cobra’s ‘hash’ to his own satisfaction, incidentally nearly blowing out the corner of the dressing-room.

I had always understood that Indians were reluctant to kill snakes, but my servants slaughtered them eagerly and indiscriminately, including (until they were taught better) even the little gentle water-snake with its pretty blue Greek fret, and the great, beneficent rat-snake, which afterwards became fairly common about the house, and which I used to revere as a sort of incarnation of the Lar. I felt, however, that the very turbulence of the Indian’s enmity toward the serpent was the reaction from an ancient fear that was more than merely physical.

The only instance of actual serpent-worship which I encountered was a certain generally-observed anniversary when it was customary even for Brahmin women to place bowls of milk before all the snakes’ holes in the neighbourhood. The traces of this primeval faith, however, are universal in Indian religion and art. Sculptured slabs exhibiting the image of the many-headed naga are common in the villages, and Sesha, the serpent of eternity, represented in the same fashion, has an honourable place in the Puranic pantheon. The naga is the garland or bracelet of Siva, and Krishna is

worshipped as the conqueror and reclamer of the serpent king. Naga, the Indian name of the cobra, is also used of a mythical race of dæmonic beings who are supposed to have been the original inhabitants of the South, and who are often represented in early mediæval art as a sort of mermen or mermaids with snaky tails, and with cobra hoods behind their heads like aureoles. They thus form a convenient link between the purely reptile naga and certain early races and dynasties who bore the name. They are said to have been conquered by the new gods, especially by Krishna, and to have been then deputed to preside over the waters under the earth.

The natural fear which the cobra and other deadly snakes inspire is therefore reinforced by ancestral and sometimes almost subconscious superstition, which often takes the form of fantastic natural history. I was cycling back from Amrāvati (described in the next chapter) with an Indian friend when the latter exclaimed faintly, swerved violently, and then dismounted. Only then did he explain that he had ridden within six inches of a naga, which had raised its head to strike at him. We ran back along the road and attacked the creature, which was unusually large; but having no weapons but stones, we could do it no great harm before it disappeared into a hole. My companion told me that in the popular opinion this was a disastrous state of affairs, as the naga, should it be attacked but not dispatched, invariably tracked down its assailant and lay in wait for him. We had a long journey home by rail before us, and we fancifully allowed the serpent a week to reach and cross Godavery after us. Sure enough, as we walked together in

the twilight a week later near my house, we nearly trod upon a very similar cobra, which apparently failed, however, to recognise us.

Accident often endorses superstition in this way. Thus another story declares that a dead naga's mate avenges him; and after the above-mentioned explosion of a cobra by my butler the household was much disconcerted by the discovery, a few days later, of the newly-cast slough of a cobra in the corner of the dressing-room exactly corresponding, at the other end of the house, to that in which the murder had occurred. The solemn symmetrical character of this accidental sequel certainly suggested the portentous, as if (I do not know whether my servants shared this notion with me) some subtle trigonometrical intuition or infernal divination (*divyajñāna*) had been at work, which had somehow taken a wrong turn.

Perhaps we are all serpent-worshippers at heart. Certainly, even for a European, few experiences less easily lose their thrill with repetition than the sudden sight of a full-grown cobra hurrying with expanded hood, like an idol come to life, across a familiar fallow-field in open sunlight, a terrible and splendid spectacle of death in the midst of life. It appears at one's feet like the living brazen ornament fallen straight from the wrist of the Eternal. It flows like a little river of oblivion, upon which the hood seems now the prow of a mystic ship, and now her spread heraldic sail miraculously reversed, as if in illustration of some divine paradox. So like a river does the creature swiftly wind in its unaltering form that the eye fails to follow it, and glancing from the slippery scales again and again is left behind upon the void earth.

Impiously once at such a time, and as if reacting fantastically from that reverence, I seized a naga by the tail as she entered a crevice of the dry cotton-soil. I supposed her queenly head to be safely imprisoned beyond return, and I was horrified when it reappeared regardant out of a continuation of the crevice only a foot away from the original hole. Luckily the intervening earth held firm, and I beat the creature pitifully to death with my bamboo staff.

No cobra except, I am told, the great hamadryad, or king-cobra, has any chance against a man with a big stick, who sees it in time; and I never killed one without feeling like a felon. I have been told that the cobra is naturally gentle and benevolent. Indeed, it never seems to bite except under provocation, and I can well believe that if everyone knew how to treat it, and if no one ever trod on it accidentally, it might safely be spared and fondled as Mr. W. H. Hudson would have us fondle the viper. After my own half-hearted experiment I heard of a Tamil man who habitually picked up cobras by the tail! A missionary told me that he one day found his four-year-old son actually playing with a cobra under the dining-room table. The child was crawling after the snake and alternately pulling it back by the tail and letting it go again, a game which appeared to amuse the snake as well as the child. The man of God was naturally horrified at this pretty realisation of the prophet's vision of the child and the asp. It was a matter of some difficulty and delicacy, he told me, to coax the boy away from his weird companion, but the lure of an older plaything finally prevailed, and the apocalyptic reptile was then most unscripturally shot. How else can one

treat this casual dispenser of sudden death, however well-meaning?

For a full dose of poison from a full-grown cobra there is no known cure. Quite recently an Australian doctor in Calcutta thought he had found one, and allowed himself to be bitten many times in the arm. Some say he overlooked one of the bites when treating himself, but in any case . . . the treatment failed. Once in the row of houses adjoining the College where I taught, a large cobra fell from the roof in the night upon a sleeping Brahmin woman. Waking to see it crawling in the direction of her sleeping children, she seized and held it and was bitten again and again. Her husband came to her aid, and was also bitten several times before the snake was killed. All the next day the dead snake was to be seen on the verandah pial, while the woman lay as if in trance within the house, obscurely fighting for life, and a sorrowful crowd waited in the street. The English doctor gave her up at four, but the Indian spell-reciters maintained their efforts till the end, which came at sundown. The man, strangely, suffered no ill-effect, apparently because the snake had exhausted its venom on the heroic wife before it bit him.

Snake-charmers commonly carry about a number of cobras in little round baskets. They play to them on a musical gourd and pretend to charm them, but the snakes, I believe, are always first deprived of their venom-bags. These jugglers also commonly keep in a bag a wretched mongoose upon a string, which is made to fight with the harmless cobras; but neither of the combatants show much interest in the stale encounter. I once came tantalisingly near to seeing this classic battle

fought in earnest under natural conditions. I was returning from a morning walk when I heard a loud and continuous hiss arising from a hedge of cactus and aloe at the side of the track at a spot less than a furlong from my paddock-gate. I peered vainly into the hedge for half a minute; then, becoming impatient, I fired my shot-gun at the noise, blowing a round hole in the cactus screen. The hissing stopped, and across the loophole in the cactus I presently saw the body of a large snake slowly flowing; and a little later I observed a very large mongoose (the animal is common in those fields) slinking away along a hedge that met the first at right angles. He moved reluctantly and with hesitation, and repeatedly stopped to look round, as if loth to be deprived of his dreadful prey. He showed, in fact, a marvellous self-possession, seeing that the gun must have been fired within six feet of him. Whether he already had the naga by the neck at the time, or was merely engaging it, I do not know. In such encounters the mongoose seems to rely, not on the virtuous herb of which old bestiaries tell, but on his own quickness and 'science,' and to a less extent on the deceptive length of his fur. The cobra, for a wild thing, is comparatively slow in striking. He always strikes downward, like a hammer, and his range as he sits hardly exceeds eighteen inches. I fancy the mongoose by a feint causes him to strike the ground and then swiftly pins him by the back of the neck.

Since even Western science has failed to furnish mankind with an equivalent for the fabulous antidote of the mongoose, it is natural that the traditional spells and charms should have retained their popularity as cures for snake-bite. How

much this is the case even among English-educated Indians will appear from the following episode. A few days after the performance of a College play, I invited the whole cast to a day's picnic on one of the wooded islands that support the Godavery Anicut. We chartered and filled a Homeric sailing-ship, such as are used for the passenger service of the river and canals, and proceeded to spend a delightful day in bathing, feasting, singing, roaming and playing games. Early in the afternoon, however, a shadow fell upon our mirth, for one of the party, in searching for berries, was bitten by a snake. The young man was brought to me, looking pitifully amazed, and with beads of perspiration on his brow. His dead assailant, a small snake which had lately eaten a lizard, was also produced. It looked to me like a young Russell's viper, which is highly poisonous; and this was the general opinion. We were in the middle of the river, two miles from either shore, but the Anicut at that season (it was early spring) is a dry causeway. At its eastern end lay Dowlaischwaram, where there was a Government dispensary; in the other direction, about the same distance away, there was a village where a well-known practitioner in spells resided. Everyone urged that the wounded youth should be walked off westward to the wizard, but I insisted that they should take him to Dowlaischwaram, and so they did. Two hours later he returned perfectly well and happy, but I cannot claim that my advice saved him. It transpired that they had not taken him to the dispensary after all, but to a second wizard who practised in Dowlaischwaram!

An Indian snake almost as well known abroad as the cobra

is the python, or boa-constrictor, which is not poisonous, but which crushes its victim in its coils. There is a smaller black variety called a hill-python, which I have seen, however, or a black snake very like it, not only in the hills, but in a marsh near my house in the plains. The python proper is magnificently dappled or clouded. It kills jackals and large monkeys, but I never heard of the Indian python (except in books) killing men or cattle. But then I never saw in India a python as large as the Indian pythons in the London Zoo. I have often heard Leighton's statue of an 'athlete struggling with a python' criticised on the ground that a snake of the size represented would easily have crushed its antagonist, and I have often doubted whether the criticism was a sound one. Rather it seemed to me that the brazen serpent in question was not large enough to be convincing. My Indian experience inclines to confirm this view. At festivals and places of pilgrimage one often sees lusty young men carrying pythons larger than Leighton's. It may be 'all done by kindness,' but if the snake were as powerful as people say there would surely sometimes be unpleasant 'complications,' and I never heard of any.

Once while I was riding through a meadow on the fringe of the jungle near Rajahmundry my horse suddenly swerved, and I saw a python about ten feet long lying perfectly still and straight with its head on the path. It looked as if someone had killed it and placed it there to frighten people. It did not move when I cautiously walked my horse round it. I then lashed at its head with the thong of my whip. The stroke fell wide about an inch from the python's nose, and

elicited a momentary flicker of the forked tongue. No one knows exactly the real uses of the serpent's tongue. Mr. Hudson suggests that one of them is to signal, 'I am alive: leave me alone,' and I believe him. I did not obey the signal at once. The thought occurred to me, that here at last was a chance of testing my theory about Leighton's critics. Like a discreet Saint George, I got off my horse and examined the sleeping dragon very carefully. At close quarters, however, it looked to me considerably larger and more convincing than Leighton's python. I doubted also whether I was personally as fit as his bronze athlete. I reflected that in case my earlier doubts of critical omniscience should be set at rest in a direction unfavourable to my theory, no one but the serpent would be any the wiser; and I thought he looked quite wise enough already. I therefore remounted my charger and smote the python fairly across the gorget with my whip-lash. They say that the cobra is unable to balance more than about eighteen inches of her length on end, but I have more than once observed that rock-pythons and other large snakes, when they wish to alter their direction in a hurry, are able to lift nearly two-thirds of their length clear of the ground and to swing it round like a rigid bar on the fulcrum of the remainder. I saw a magnificent exhibition of this feat on the part of the python now before me, which thereupon disappeared into a thicket at full speed. The sudden restoration of that inert and enigmatic shape to vigorous life was as exciting as a miracle, and I was not at all sorry for having 'let slip' what was after all a rather dubious opportunity of rehabilitating Lord Leighton's posthumous reputation as a zoologist.



TEMPLE OF KRISHNA, VIJAYANAGAR.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FAR PAST

I

THE oldest Tamil literature goes back to the beginning of the Christian era. Of Telugu literature there is no trace before the eleventh century A.D. I have stated several times that the Tamils have inherited a richer and older tradition than the Telugus. This statement, however, requires qualification. The oldest architectural monuments of Telingana are at least as old as the oldest Tamil literature, and older by many centuries than the oldest extant Tamil architecture. The history of civilisation in Telingana can be traced back even further than in the Tamil country. But Telinga history lacks the continuity of the Tamil tradition.

The Telingas of to-day dislike their administrative association with Tamil Madras, and fervently desire to be constituted into a separate province, to be called the Andhra province. The Telingas have seldom been very fortunate politically. The dawn of history discovers the people of this region divided, perhaps by the Godavery river, between two famous kingdoms, the Kalinga and the Andhra, both mentioned in Pliny's geographical survey. The name 'Kalinga' also occurs, it will be remembered,

in the list of ancient Indian kingdoms preserved in the Brahminical liturgy. The Kalingas were the only Indian people, apart from the far South, who resisted the great Emperor Asoka (third century B.C.); the remorse of that pious Buddhist for the slaughter and suffering involved in their subjugation remains on record upon rock and pillar to this day. Near Bhuvaneswar, in Orissa, not far north of the present frontier of Telingana, there is a monastic excavation with a long inscription commemorating a Kalinga king named Kharavela, who lived about 160 A.D. This inscription throws much light on the history and culture of that time and region,* but for the present it lies outside my province.

The Andhra dynasty, which at the beginning of the Christian era is found ruling the region south of Godavery, came, like the river itself, from the neighbourhood of Nasik in the Western Ghats on the far side of India. There, garnished with columns and capitals obviously derived from Darius' Persepolis, their earliest excavations, contemporary with Kharavela's, are still to be seen. In the first centuries of our era they ruled middle India almost from sea to sea. Their power lingered longest in the region between the Godavery and Krishna rivers, which has ever since been called after them; and the Telinga people now cherish their memory with a vague pride. Their court language, however, was not Telugu, but Prakrit.†

* See article on the Hāthigumpha Inscription in the *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xlix., March, 1920, by K. G. Sankara Aiyar.

† An erotic anthology in this language is ascribed to Hala, the seventeenth Andhra king; and there is extant a Tamil translation of

Perhaps the most interesting memorial of the Andhras is the magnificent Buddhist 'tope' or stupa which they erected at Amrāvati, on the south bank of the Krishna river, about seventeen miles from Bezwada. A huge monumental tumulus, an Indian prototype and original of the Ceylonese dagaba and the Burmese 'paya,' it was surrounded by a massive Vedic railing of sculptured stone, and was itself thickly crusted with sculptural reliefs. Of this barbaric wonder, which Europeans in their ignorance have often described as the crowning masterpiece of Indian art, almost nothing now remains upon the site. Perhaps the best preserved of the sculptures decorate the central staircase of the British Museum. As much or more is treasured at Madras, and single fragments are to be seen in local schools and halls.

The bas-reliefs, as usual at the time, are illustrations of the life-story of the Buddha. No such crowded and various compositions exist elsewhere in Indian art. There are indications of the influence of Greek sculpture (by way of Bactria and the north-west) in the style. The draped figure of the Buddha, for instance, has obviously been transported bodily (as into a heaven) from Gandhara copy-books. The lions that flanked the gates wear wigs of Assyrian curl. Otherwise the work is thoroughly Indian. Within those lotus disks, as if through a thousand magic eyes, we look

a famous collection of tales, made at the same king's court by a Brahmin named Gunadhya, who is said to have written in the Paisāchi (goblin) dialect of Prakrit. The 'goblin' is generally described as a dialect of North-west India, but I have reason to believe that the term was used of a dialect of Middle India.

again at the crowded life of second-century Middle India, and visualise the memory of neighbouring Kalinga which the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang, nearly five centuries later, still found current in those parts: 'their shoulders rubbed one with the other, and the axles of their chariot-wheels grided together; and when they raised their sleeves a perfect tent was formed.' The last is perhaps a Chinese figure, for the Telingas of those days, men and women alike, though heavily jewelled, seem to have gone almost naked. The facial type is rather less like the Aryan than is common in Telingana to-day.

Bezwada, near the site of this ancient stupa, is three hours journey by train south of Rajahmundry. It is like Rajahmundry and Dowlaishwaram combined and copied on a somewhat smaller scale. Its railway bridge over the sacred Krishna is three-quarters of a mile long, and its Anicut, linking the red hills which dominate the town, is a little way above the bridge. The blue streams which thread the sand of the river-bed have not the sea-like volume of Godavery, and almost wither away in summer even above the Anicut. Old stone bulls and other statues, taken from the river and set upon the walls and platforms that flank the barrier, commemorate the former importance of the neighbourhood.

From the lonely site of Amrāvati, seventeen miles up the river, the red rocks of Bezwada, plainly visible in the clear air across the uneventful plain, look like giant gates, or solitary pillars of the Indian Hercules. Early in 1919, A. B. and I made a pilgrimage to the spot. The circle of the pavement of

ceremonial circum-ambulation, which ran between the tope and the great rail, stands in a hollow, surrounded by a mound feathered with common babul trees. This mound was raised by the spoilers, official and local, who dug out the remains of the stupa during the last century. It is known locally as 'the mound of the lamps,' whether because lamps were found there—though I never heard of any—or because the ornamental disks of the great sculptured rail reminded the villagers of some heroic sort of saucer-lamp.

A small votive stupa, probably one of scores that stood here in ancient times, has been re-erected outside the mound. It stands about seven feet high, and is covered with sculptures in the world-familiar style, the only relics of that lavish art which the place retains. The actual site of the main stupa is a mere hollow, a majestic and melancholy kind of fairy ring, where the delicate emanations of old Buddhist fancy may be supposed sometimes to forgather still and overawe the barbarous local bogies. About two hundred yards away the river-bed, like a giant road of sand studded with whorled rocks and azure pools, sweeps away to the Bezwada barrier, the delta, and the sea.

Between the tope and the river stands a Savia temple of later date, but obviously very old. It rises above the fear of floods on three oblong terraces of grey stone. It is larger than the temples of this region usually are, massively built but almost bare of ornament, and representing no remembered style; a memorial of conditions changed indeed from those which produced the famous stupa, but equally remote from the rusticity of

to-day. A little further on we came to the village of Dharnikota, a primitive place, without one tiled dwelling that I could see, yet methought the roofs of thatch were taller and roomier, the mud walls thicker, than elsewhere. The freshly-severed head of a buffalo lay decorously in the middle of a swept space before a rustic shrine by the wayside. It was an offering to the mother-goddess of the village, whose religion, older than Siva's, older even than the Buddha's, remains the chief concern of local piety, while theirs are neglected, or forgotten.

I was reminded of the buffalo's head which is usually represented upon the pedestal of the idols of Parvati in her widely-worshipped character as the Slayer of the Buffalo-Demon, which is evidently a sort of metropolitan concentration of the universal type of the Village Mother.

Of Dharnikota the world remembers more than the place itself remembers. In Hiuen Tsiang's time it seems to have been the capital of a kingdom extending from the Krishna river to the Tamil country, for he gives its name to the whole region. The name Dhanakataka is mentioned in Andhra inscriptions on the far side of India, inscriptions older than the Amrāvati tope itself. My companion, a graduate in rustic lore, quoted an old Telugu saying which evidently harked back to the days when this now rude and quiet village was regarded as a sort of Corinth: 'I will never consent for three-halfpence, said the young lady of Dhanakataka.'

Other vestiges of the Buddhist era are scattered throughout the Telugu country. Thus the little hill of Sankaram, which appears in the distance in the picture of Anakapalle reproduced

in this book, was the site of a Buddhist monastery. Its foundations and a few weather-worn sculptures still remain, and the black rock of the hillside has been carved into many little votive stupas, which the rustics of to-day reverence as representations of Siva's phallic lingam.

II

At the beginning of the third century the Andhras were superseded, and their kingdom divided. Their successors were dynasties of little note until the Chalukyas, who came, like the Andhras, from Maharashtra, conquered the country early in the seventh century. They installed here a separate branch of the dynasty, which is known as the Eastern Chalukyan, and which held sway in Telingana for four centuries. Most of the local Brahmins, according to their own account, came over with the Chalukyas, and the gradual conversion of the people from Buddhism to Brahminical Hinduism was mostly effected during this epoch. The eastern Chalukyas acquired the character of a national dynasty, and towards the end of their term of rule a vernacular literature first began to grow up. The country was conquered by the Tamil Cholas in the eleventh century, but the local dynasty was merely bound by marriage to the conqueror, and allowed to retain vice-regal power; and in 1074 this vice-regal Chalukya-Chola house furnished the imperial Chola succession with a notable sovereign in the person of Kulottinga Chola I. The father of this prince, Rajaraja Narendra of Rajahmundry, is still remembered in the

Telugu country as the inaugurator of the golden age of Telugu letters.*

After the fall of the Chola empire a considerable Telugu kingdom arose somewhat further inland and well within what is now the frontier of Hyderabad. This was the Kakātiya kingdom of Warangal. Its builders laid their foundations bravely, but the doom of Muhammadan conquest was at hand, and the promise of a glorious day for Telugu culture was rudely broken. In 1323, little more than a century after the establishment of the kingdom, Pratapa Rudra, the last king of the dynasty, was carried away captive to Delhi, and his capital destroyed. The empty shell of the great fort of Warangal, and a fine temple near, in the same provincial variant of the Chalukyan style as is found at Simhāchalam, are the most imposing monuments of mediæval architecture still to be seen in Telingana. For ten years I lived so near to them that I could have reached them in a night, but alas ! I never saw them, and now, perhaps, I never shall.

A particular interest attaches to the early history of this part of India in view of the probability that the colonisation and civilisation of Indo-China and Java, that glorious and still almost undiscovered chapter of Indian history, was largely the work of the Telingas and Kalingas of the first millennium A.D. Of this probability there are many indications, and others are continually coming to light. Modern research has located at the

* The Telugu translation of the Mahabharata, generally regarded as the grandest work in the language, was largely made during his reign. Most of the other literature of this epoch consists of translations into Telugu of the masterpieces of Hindu sacred literature.

mouth of the Godavery the unknown port which Pliny describes as the place 'whence they set sail for Chryse,' the Golden Chersonese, or Malay Peninsula.* The people of Pegu, through whom Indian civilisation was conveyed to Burmah, were called Talaing (Telinga), while throughout Further India and the islands, Indian immigrants generally are known as Klings (Kalingas) to this day. Javanese and other inscriptions bear witness to a long-maintained connection with princes of Vengi, the principal capital of the Andhra country in those days. It is likely that in such structures as the *chandis* of the Diëng plateau in Java we have pure examples of the architecture of Chalukyan Telingana such as the homeland has lost. The sculptures of Borobodur, though infinitely lovelier, have much in common with those of Amrāvati, and may well be a later development of the same school.

It is an impressive, a mysterious event, this migration of beauty, like another Arethusa, beyond seas, leaving the homeland empty. Was it actually the passing of Buddhism before the new order (Borobodur is Buddhist, but there are splendid Brahminical temples in Java belonging to the same period), or were there deeper reasons, as so often transpires, economic or climatic?

III

The early history of India is writ large across the world in a hieroglyphic of ruinous temple-cities. The toilsome perusal

* Jouvean-Dubreuli, *Ancient History of the Deccan*, p. 87.

of this tremendous chronicle is surely the most alluring of all the romantic pursuits, which engage the sojourner in that glorious and heart-breaking land. I shall perhaps fall less unhappily short than I otherwise should of the graceless task which I have set myself in this chapter, the Satanic feat of exhibiting all the kingdoms of that mysterious world in a moment of time—if I briefly indicate the figure and meaning of two more at least of the relevant passages of that monumental scripture.

In the north of the Tamil country, one night's journey southward by canal-boat from Madras, there is a place long since known to mariners and the Europeans of Madras as the Seven Pagodas. Indians call it Mahābalipuram, the city of great Bali, a mythical demon king. The demon city itself, if it ever existed, has long since been swallowed by the waves and sands, but the mighty boulders embedded or piled upon the shore still appear to teem with curious and colossal sculpture. Some are hollowed into porches panelled with mythological reliefs. One enormous whale-shaped ridge has been carved into a curious chain of model temples, known locally as the Rathas or processional cars of the five Pandavas. The precipitous face of another, apparently divided at one time by a waterfall, wears like an embroidery in high relief a representation of the descent of the Ganges to earth at the behest of Siva. This is a notable masterpiece of Indian art. The figure of the god stands majestic amid a flying cloud of witnesses, godlings and sages crowding the granite firmament on either hand as they hurry to behold the cosmic

miracle. Below them Vedic scholars issue from a hermitage to dip their pitchers in the sacred stream, which is symbolised by a coil of Nagas or half-human serpents, presiding spirits of the nether springs, skilfully carved within the natural fissure of the rock. The beasts of the Himalayan forest, headed by a pair of immemorial elephants, look on with never-sated wonder, and a cat, exactly in the spirit of old Buddhist fables, does eternal penance with uplifted paws, while the mice play unharmed at her feet.

So far the famous bas-relief. Not far away, like the omphalos of a vanished world, there stands what seems a royal throne, a ponderous oblong sill of granite, whereon a couchant lion of corresponding scale takes the place of scroll or pillow. Chiselling and polish are as sharp and smooth as if the work had been done yesterday. Hard by a bath or cistern cut in the rock is equally well preserved. Everywhere steps and mortice-holes in the rock mark the sites of buildings long since carried clean away by time or wind or tidal wave. The delicately carven door-jambs of an unfinished gopuram, a gateway of the sea-winds, crown the topmost eminence of all, but these are the work of a later age; they bear the unmistakable character of the art of sixteenth-century Vijayanagar. Of the structural architecture of the original city one monument alone remains, the most romantic of all the monuments of the site. It is a graceful temple of builded stones, which sits, as it were, with its feet in the sea. The central cella, with its tapering spire, perhaps the most perfect example of a Dravidian vimana, still rises foursquare and flawless, and an

ample courtyard surrounded by a wall crowned with couchant bulls has lately been dug out of the sand. In the desolate forecourt, around the steadfast granite standard of the god, the waves of the Eastern sea prostrate themselves, as if in ironical or helpless adoration of the sanctuary which they are destined to devour. Travellers' tradition avers that this is only the last of seven such 'pagodas,' and that the spires of the rest may yet sometimes be seen under the waves.

Local memory has long lost touch with the history of these marvels of the shore. The place naturally swarms with tales and legends, but they are seldom convincing. The people of the ancient city were obviously devout Saivas, but most of the stories now current have a Vaishnava colouring brought, perhaps, from neighbouring Conjeeveram, a great stronghold of the Vaishnavas. Much popular interest centres in a great, round, rocking boulder known as Krishna's butter-ball, which is connected by a funny fable with the penitential cat in the bas-relief. We have seen how the monolithic temples are associated with Krishna's cousins, the five heroic Pandavas; but the monolithic animals which stand among them, a bull, a lion, and an elephant, shew that three of them were dedicated respectively to Siva, his bride Parvati, and Indra, the Vedic rain-god, who is now no longer generally worshipped.

In the light of recent archæological research these monuments no longer appear as the remnant of a demon city; nor, though far older than they look, do they prove to be so old as was thought in the time, for instance, of the poet Southey, who fancifully describes them in one of his epics. They are

now known to have been wrought at the behest of Narasimha-varman I., surnamed Mamalla, who ruled at Kānchi (Conjeeveram) in the middle of the seventh century A.D. This Mamalla was the most powerful of the kings of the Pallava dynasty, suzerains of the South for at least four hundred years. The Pallavas were originally strangers to the South, and when the native Chola dynasty, after a long eclipse, came back to power in the tenth century, they set themselves to obliterate the memory of the Pallavas with a success which, for many centuries, was almost complete. The corruption of the original name of Mamalla's city, Mamalla-puram, to Mahabalipuram, the city of the great demon, or 'foreign devil,' as the Chinese have it, was probably not accidental.

The sculptures and sculptural shrines of Mamallapuram, with the exception of a few works due to Mamalla's father,* are the oldest known examples of Tamil art. To the artist the chief interest of the site, save perhaps for the lovely temple on the surf, lies in the figure-sculpture, which constitutes a school of itself, and while less perfect than much elsewhere in decorative construction, is on the whole the liveliest in India. The aim of these old sculptors was delightfully realistic. They were obviously hampered by the superfluous limbs of the new Puranic gods, and hid them away whenever they could, unlike the master sculptors of Ellora, who could wield that monstrous convention with magical effect. The Pallava sculptors loved animals as the Buddhist fablers loved them. One of the best statues of a bull ever made is at Mamallapuram.

* *E.g.*, on the Trichinopoly rock-stair.

The most modern of the sculptures in effect is a life-like family group of monkeys.

The interest of the five celebrated Rathas or monolithic shrines is rather scholastic than æsthetic. They are fortunate illustrations of the history of Indian architecture which look backwards and forwards at once. Let us consider first their backward reference. Though intended in honour of Brahminical gods, they are clearly copies on a reduced scale of the many-storeyed Buddhist monasteries often described with bewildering rhetoric by the pious Hiuen Tsiang. The ground plan and interior arrangements of such monasteries are more exactly familiar to us from excavated sites in the north-west, and from the stately caves of Maharashtra, but the 'cars' of Mamallapuram are unique representations of their outward aspect and elevation.

The ground floor, to judge from our exemplars, would be a pillared hall of assembly. So much, being built of stone, often remains to this day of the ancient monasteries in Ceylon. The superstructure was probably of wood, like the Burmese monasteries of to-day. The oblong sleeping-cells of the monks were set round the upper chambers, each of which was smaller than the one below, thus leaving a ledge or terrace, over which the sleeping-cells, each with its little waggon roof, protruded. The structure was thus pyramidal in shape, and crowned, if the ground plan were square, with a dome, if oblong, with a waggon roof like that of the single cells. Each of these types is twice represented at Mamallapuram. On the terraces little upright cells, apparently intended for solitary meditation in a sitting posture, usually alternate with the

oblong sleeping-cells. All these features of the wooden originals are faithfully represented on a reduced scale (the dummy sleeping-cells being too small to sleep in, even if they had been hollowed out) in the solid rock-sculpture before us. My description is prosaic, but the representation in visible terms of so much of the ritual and philosophy of the classic age of Indian mysticism is impressive in the extreme. At Mamallapuram the weight of the storeyed superstructure, thus reproduced in terms of solid rock, generally proved too great for the columns of the ground floor, too faithfully copied from originals designed to carry only a carven pile of timber. Cracks evidently appeared while the work was yet in progress, and the larger shrines remain unfinished to this day.

Turning now to the forward significance of these rocky 'cars,' it is evident that in the square and the oblong examples before us we behold the archetypes respectively of the *vimāna* and the *gopuram*, the central tower and the gatehead, the two principal and peculiar features of South Indian temple-architecture. The square monument is already a *vimāna*, but the waggon-roof of its oblong neighbour must be lifted in imagination far into the sky on a tapering tower of intermediate storeys, each with its attachment of model meditation-cells and sleeping-cells, before its essential relation to the tall pagoda-gate of later times is evident. Finally, too, the tranquil ranks of cells, with unconscious irony, were masked behind a pandemonium of idols. So is the life-story of Indian religion written upon the foreheads of the Southern temple-towers.

Both the vimāna and the gopuram are peculiar to the South. The leading feature of the northern (called by Fergusson the Indo-Aryan) style is the beautiful curvilinear spire called a 'shikara,' or mountain-peak (whereas 'vimāna' is the word used in poetry of the floating pavilions of the gods). The shikara, unlike the vimāna, has no storeys, but is usually fretted with horizontal grooves and otherwise embossed, until it eerily resembles a giant maize-cob. It is already plentiful in Ganjam, the most northerly district of the Telugu country. Of the origin of the shikara-form nothing is certainly known, nor has anyone ever explained why it should be peculiar to the north, and the other to the south. Mr. E. B. Havell's attractive guess that the two types of tower properly belong respectively to the northern Vishnu and the southern Siva will not easily recommend itself to anyone with a detailed knowledge of Hindu temples.* At the same time it is evident, as we have seen, that both the southern forms are derived from the north, though they do not seem ever to have been translated by northern architects out of the original wood into terms of brick and stone. I have sometimes thought that the shikara, the vimāna, and something similar to the gopuram correspond to three forms of tower which the ancient shasters of the architects mention as appropriate respectively to standing, seated, and recumbent idols.

* The two styles are only found side by side on the borderline between their respective spheres, as at Patadakal near Bādāmi. Mr. Havell seems to be under the mistaken impression that there are 'Dravidian' towers at Bhuvanewar and Khujarāho; but the Saiva temples at both places have the shikara, like the Vaishnava temples.

Of the rivalry in the south between vimanam and gopuram, between the central tower and the gatehead, I have spoken already. At Mamallapuram, and in later temples of the same period, which are still fairly numerous in the neighbourhood of Conjeeveram, the gatehead is yet undeveloped, and the vimanam is supreme. This fact gives these temples an advantage in unity and purity of design over the far more imposing mediæval temples of the same neighbourhood, which probably themselves often screen a core of Pallava date behind their overwhelming outworks. The glory of the vimāna culminates in the great Saiva temple of Tanjore, built by the Cholas early in the eleventh century A.D. After Tanjore the central tower ceases to dominate, and the horn of the gatehead begins to be exalted.

IV

In the romantic world revealed by the earliest Tamil literature,* which dates, as we saw, from the beginning of the first millennium A.D. and is thus contemporary with the Amravati sculptures described above, three princely families divide the fealty of the far South between them. They are the Cholas of the Cauvery region, the Pandyas of the pearly straits, and the Cheras or Keralas of Malabar in the West. During the centuries of Pallava dominion these autochthonous powers were eclipsed, but at the end of the ninth century the Cholas arose and defeated the Pallavas, and by the end of the

* A vivid notion of this delightful literature, which has not received the attention it deserves, may be obtained from *The Tamils 1,800 Years Ago*, by V. Kanakasabhai, Madras.

tenth had established one of the most powerful empires of pre-Muhammadan India. Their rule extended up the coast, as we have seen, beyond Godavery to Kalinga, included the whole of the further South, and reached across the Deccan to the Tungabhadra river, the boundary of the later empire of Vijayanagar. To this dominion on the mainland the Cholas added Ceylon, and an indeterminate sovereignty over the neighbouring islands. They crossed the bay and captured Kadāram or old Prome, the capital of the Talaing kingdom of Pegu. They even sent an army into Bengal, and chastised (or so at least their inscriptions claim) the king of the once famous Magadha. They were not only conquerors but notable administrators, and the system of local government which they established is well worth the attention of later rulers.* Their well-compacted empire held together without serious loss till the end of the twelfth century.

In 1011 A.D. Rajaraja Deva, the greatest of the Chola kings, unless his son be accounted even greater in the roll of glory, dedicated the great temple of Tanjore, which still stands as a worthy monument of the patient, vast, and merciless energy of his pride and might. It stands intact to this day within its own Mahratta moat and rampart, attached on one side to the wall of the old four-square city of Tanjore. Except, perhaps, for the great shikara-shrine of Bhuvaneswar, it is the only temple of the great age in India comparable in scale and immediate impressiveness with the mediæval temples

* The best account of it is given in *Ancient India*, by S. K. Aiyungar (Luzac & Co., London).

of the Tamil country. Its central tower, a stepped and sculptured pyramid two hundred feet in height, is crowned with a carven monolith which had to be pushed up a ramp of sand commencing five miles away, in a village whose name still commemorates the fact. This temple, dedicated to Siva as Brihadeswara, Lord of Might, lacks the labyrinth of porches and corridors which characterise the later temples. Its massy tower and cella stand in a paved court surrounded by a cloister and adorned with a gatehead larger indeed than was usual before, but insignificant by comparison with the central pyramid. The monolithic idol of the Nandi, Siva's bull, cribbed in a mandapam before the temple, is the largest but not the loveliest in India. When I lived in Tanjore a splendid peacock was fond of perching on the sill of the mandapam, as if to make its lifeless denizen look huger and blacker and uglier than ever.

In the court of Brihadeswara to-day one seldom sees a throng of worshippers worthy of its age and beauty, for even the gods in their long lives must endure the fickleness of men. The eighteenth-century Mahratta rajahs of Tanjore were Vaishnavas, and built for their queens at Siva's very gate a castle as tall, though not so fair as his, whence they might look westward away from him to the topless towers (the epithet is literal, for alas! they have never been finished) of his rival in Srirangam. Perhaps the god's dignity has never quite recovered from the effects of this royal snub.

Tanjore is still a peopled city and the capital of a district; but the Imperial Cholas, like the Andhras, the Pallavas, and the Vijayanagar kings, have also their desolate monument,

itself a vast necropolis, in that yet vaster builded burial-ground of empires which we call India. I can only tell its story at second hand, for to my lasting regret I never saw it, nor even heard of it when I was working in the neighbourhood, so deep is the silence that surrounds it, and so still to-day has grown the fame of the fine things which the mourning Motherland still cherishes in her secret heart. Rajendra Choladeva, the son of the builder of the Tanjore temple, was the martial second Solomon of the Cholas who captured Prome and Martaban beyond the sea, and watered his elephants in the Ganges. Of the latter expedition he was especially proud, for the Tamils, who always remained in awe of their Aryan civilisers of the North, had been in the habit of ascribing this very exploit to the kings of their heroic age. Rajendra assumed the title of Gangaikonda, Conqueror of Ganges, and gave the unwieldy name of Gangaikonda-Cholapuram to the new royal city that he was building in the neighbourhood of Trichinopoly. This magnificently-planned capital, with its reservoir-embankment sixteen miles in length, its conduits and sluices, its palace, its Saiva temple rivalling in size, and exceeding in art, his father's temple in Tanjore, was destined by the divinity which unshapes the ends of kings, even when they build temples in its honour, early to be numbered among the derelict cities of the East, a habitation of jackals and the wild peacock. Many of the sculptures of the great temple, examples of the finest period of Chola art, together with the whole wall of the enclosure, were many centuries later carried away by the strong, silent Englishmen of the Public Works Department

and built into the Coleroon dam; even as a stronger and yet more silent race may some day dig up, and use for its own purposes, the stones of what is now the newest of at least half a dozen still partially visible Delhis.

The rumour of the greatness of the Cholas now sounds very faint across the spaces and the times, but their name is still obscurely familiar to most Englishmen as part of the word 'Coromandel,' or 'Chola-mandalam,' the Chola province, now applied to the whole east coast of the Tamil country. *Mandalam* was the technical Tamil term for a province of the Chola Empire, corresponding to the Northern Rāshtra (as in Mahārāshtra, 'the great province'). The *mandalam* was subdivided into the *nadu* and the *ur*, the district and the town or village, a form of classification preserved under other names to this day.

v

During the thirteenth century the sceptre of the South passed to the Hoysala kings of the Canarese country, the builders of Halebid and many other beautiful temples still incongruously adorning remote villages in Mysore and the districts of Dhārwar and Gadag in the south of the Bombay Presidency. This part of India had an architectural style of its own, the offspring of a happy marriage of the northern and southern styles. Fergusson has dubbed it the Chalukyan style. Chalukyan temples (Hoysala would be a better name) are usually small, and remarkable for the delicate and various

carving of their doorways and pillars. The great temple of Warangal and the Kalyāna Mandapam or marriage-porch at Simhāchalam represent a provincial variant of the style. The Canarese temples do not now directly concern us, and I will only say, with all due deliberation, that they are probably without exception the loveliest shapes ever carved in stone.

When the Muhammadans under the renegade Kafur came south and destroyed Halebid in A.D. 1309 the tradition of this exquisite art was blown out like a lamp. The country itself soon recovered from the blow, for a few years later there was founded on the Tungabhadra river a city called Vijayanagar, or the City of Victory, which quickly bound the remnant of the south together and put a stop to further Muhammadan advance for more than two centuries. Vijayanagar was built in the heart of the country of Chalukyan temples, but when at last it was strong enough, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, to adorn itself in a manner worthy of its vast resources, its temples had to be built in a style almost purely Tamil.

VI

The imperial city stood only a few miles west of the limit of Telugu speech, and its first notable adorer and greatest king, Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1530), was a Telinga man, and a great patron of Telugu letters. He inaugurated what is regarded as the silver age of the art, the age of court romances, as the earlier had been the age of scriptural translation. Old



KRISHNA AS VENUGOPALA.
(PIPING COWHERD).

A Canarese temple-sculpture.

Telugu tales generally begin with the phrase, 'In the city of Vijayanagar,' and of this remote Bagdad Krishna Deva is the Haroun Alraschid. Only thirty-five years after his death, his magnificent city, 'with all her fresh-blown honours thick upon her,' was destroyed by the combined Muhammadan kingdoms of Deccan, after the disastrous defeat of her armies on the field of Talikota. Henceforward what remained of the culture of the Hindu South was barely saved from complete Islamisation by remoteness and the waning of the Crescent itself. The desolate city, kept reasonably clear of undergrowth and creepers by the piety of the Archæological Department, remains to-day very much as the Muhammadans left it, and a short account of its ruined places and temples may fitly conclude our summary of South Indian memories.

VII

As the traveller approaches the savage site of this once far-flung metropolis, a City of Refuge before she became indeed a City of Victory, he is reminded as vividly of the fears of her youth as of the arrogance of her maturity. If her later emperors were tyrants and task-masters, her earliest inhabitants were as obviously fugitives who 'cried to the rocks, fall on us, and to the mountains, cover us.' Huge tawny boulders litter the rolling plain, and cluster in mountainous piles among the temples and the towers, so that the eye fails to distinguish from afar between the rival masonries of nature and of man. This confusion of ruggedness, which imparts to the ruins

a kind of demoniac and elemental grandeur, must have added a note of weirdness even to the splendour of the city's prime.

Far away in what is now open country, the road that leads one to this desolate lair of empire passes through ponderous gateways or porticoes of squared stone, which we might call triumphal arches, if they did not so severely eschew the foreign arch for the more primitive entablature. At last we reach the rampart of the city, a lofty wall of grey stones irregularly squared, but so finely adjusted as to need no binding mortar. Unmoved enormous boulders of the region are incorporated into the wall, which noticeably lacks the round projecting towers prescribed by the latest military science of the time, as exhibited, for instance, in Humayun's fort at Delhi. One of the gates of the city still stands almost intact, and invites the imagination to enter into the treasures of the past. A triangular pseudo-arch of pure Dravidian design, it is formed of jutting, massive mouldings, and adorned with pendant lotus-cusps like those so often carved on temple pillars. A great stone slab, sculptured with the image of their simian demi-god, at one time, perhaps, the giant amulet of the gatehead, lies overthrown beside it.

Vijayanagar is almost singular among derelict Hindu cities in possessing examples of secular as well as of sacred buildings. Some of these, such as the queen's bath-house and the reputed elephant-stables, are already Arabistic in design, and many betray Arabistic influence in an occasional rather clumsy arch; otherwise the masonry of such buildings as the watch-

tower above the palace, or the donjon of the Naik, or captain of the host, belongs to an older tradition ; the second in spite of its menacing embrasure, the heavily bracketed platform of which is apparently intended as an emplacement for a cannon. The fortified enclosure of which this four-square castle makes a corner is littered with broken sculptures buried in a tangle of grass and bushes, out of which rises perpetually the wail of the wild peacock, that familiar of the old South Indian war-god, as if lamenting.

But the most interesting relics of the secular life of the city are the sculptured platforms of the palaces, and especially the great stone stage or rostrum that stands near the principal gate. The sides and front thereof are delicately carved with figures representing the celebration of the Holi, or spring festival of Krishna. That this was one of the most important functions of the local calendar we know from the contemporary accounts of the city written by Domingo Paes and Fernão Nuniz, Portuguese traders from Goa ; and the reliefs before us read like an illustration of their narratives.* Here still the captains of the host go in procession, and acrobats and soldiers with big chignons 'exercise heroic games' ; here the Arab horses purchased from Señor Nuniz are once more led in the show, and the dancing-girls exhibit their postures, or disport themselves with bamboo squirts.

On every side are to be seen temples, large and small, mandaps or porticoes, and the stone stairs of stately

* Both these narratives are given in full in Robert Sewell's *Forgotten Empire* (London, 1900), the best account of Vijayanagar.

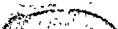
reservoirs. Giant conduits, built perhaps to carry water to the palace-courts, run here and there breast-high among the ruins. Ordinary temples are nothing accounted of in Vijayanagar nowadays. The Government resthouse in which we stayed was itself a disused temple of Siva, of which the holy of holies had been converted into a lavatory. This arrangement was perhaps not so shocking to local feeling as might appear at first sight, for Hindus are usually careless of god-forsaken shrines. I remember, for instance, that a broken sanctuary in our College compound was used without protest as a den by the College scavenger. Nevertheless the mingled pieties of East and West within me (and the mixture is becoming commoner in India year by year) were deeply shocked by that unkind and more public desecration. I wrote a scathing remark in the log-book, which was doubtless duly read with indignation later by the executive engineer, an old acquaintance whom I had not seen for years. My protest appropriately followed a complaint by an officer of the Archæological Department, who was equally scandalised because the stone columns of the portico, which was used as a dining-room, had never been whitewashed. Like all sensible men, he evidently liked to get away from his job after hours.

Another portico by the wayside (I believe it was not a temple, but an ancient choultry or hospice) was occupied for the nonce by the suite of a local aristocrat, perhaps a kinsman of the Vijayanagar kings. He had just shot a leopard in the heart of the old metropolis. He came out while his servants

were proudly shewing me the skin. He wore a beard, and was dressed in the English style with knickerbockers.

Along the north side of the city the Tungabhadra river, a tributary of the Krishna, tumbles and foams among its rocks. It is crossed by a long bridge built in the usual Vijayanagar style of monolithic entablatures and square supports. The bridge is broken now in many places, like the bridge in the vision of Mirza. A broad pathway, neatly paved with long single slabs of even length, rises and falls along the river-bank, a fashionable promenade, perhaps, in other days. By this we reach the north-west quarter of the city, built on a gradual eminence and forming altogether a large and stately precinct, fenced by a gateway-portico of the kind described above, and containing the great temple of Krishna and a number of smaller shrines. On the hillside an immense monolithic idol of the elephant-faced Ganapati sits enthroned in a porch of Greek severity and grace. The big temple itself has an outer and an inner court and wall, terraced one above the other with majestic effect. The view in this direction from the crown of the hill is like the picture of an old Greek city.

There are large temples in every quarter of Vijayanagar, which once extended for many miles. The largest are usually dedicated to Vaishnava deities, Rama or Krishna, for the Vijayanagar kings affected the Vaishnava faith. From the principal gate of each of the big temples a broad, straight, level avenue, grassy now, extends for several hundred yards. This was the way of the processional cars, the scene of the city's gayest and wildest solemnities. The avenues are lined with



stone arcades, and show also some small two-storeyed, balconied houses, the lodges, I was told, of the old nobility at festival time.

I shall not attempt the impossible task of putting the effect of the great Vijayanagar temples into words. I can only state a few bald facts to guide the reader's fancy. In spite of time and the jungle and the rage of Termagaunt and Mahound, these temples are still in a fair state of preservation. They are now well cared for by the Government, but the gods and their worshippers have deserted them. There is only one considerable exception, the old Hampe temple, not one of the handsomest, but a fane of repute ever since the city was founded, as it remains when the city is dismantled. The inmost shrine, I am told—for I might not see it—is a relic of that exquisite old Chalukyan style described above. Pillars of the same, earlier style may be seen in the smaller temple among the palaces, which was apparently the royal family chapel. Almost without further exception the temples are in the Tamil style, and make a link between Tanjore and mediæval Conjeeveram or Madura. Their idiosyncrasies, however, may be partly due to the gracious influence of the Canarese temperament as well as to priority in time, for though Vijayanagar art never achieved the delicate perfection of the pure Chalukyan, it is at least worthy in its finer moments, as in the stone car in the court of the Vittala temple, or the exquisite Kalyana Mandapam or marriage-porch in the same place, to be mentioned in the same breath. The latter building is obviously a not very remote predecessor of the

Kalikundaram pavilion described above. Its pillar-forms, however, are lighter and more graceful ; pillars shaped like monstrous animals, such as the Tamils affected even in Pallava times, are only sparsely used ; and the general proportions of the building are far lovelier. Such halls of open pillars, often richly carved, form the greater part even of the main temples at Vijayanagar, and are the chief glory of the style. Long corridors, like those of which Rameswaram is famous, and such as in later Tamil temples, as we have seen, are carried completely round the central cella so as to give the worshipper an opportunity of circumambulating the sanctuary, are altogether lacking at Vijayanagar.*

For the rest, the Vijayanagar temples invariably stand in a wide court behind high walls, which is sometimes enclosed, as in the Tamil country, by a further court and wall. The central tower is still a prominent feature, though never comparable in size to the Tanjore pyramid. The main gatehead is higher than the others, but seldom higher than the central tower. The vogue of pretentious gateheads apparently began under the Vijayanagar kings, for the great gatehead of the Saiva temple at Conjeeveram is attributed to Krishna Deva Raya, and a yet more splendid specimen at Tadpatri was an offering of the same dynasty. The elaborate gatehead, however, seems generally to have been used as a device for adorning

*A dated corridor of this kind, perhaps the earliest, is the so-called 'choultry' erected at Madura by Tirumala Naik, the magnificent Telinga governor who ruled that city, nominally under the already dispossessed emperor of Vijayanagar, but actually in his own right, or might, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

temples already existing. When the whole building was designed at once the gateheads were still kept in comparative subjection. This difference of conditions also accounts for the greater unity and purity of design of the Vijayanagar temples as compared with those of the Tamil country, many of which were noted places of worship even in Pallava times, the age of the saints, and could not be entirely rebuilt. This would explain why the tallest gopuram at Vijayanagar is that of the Hampe temple, the original cella of which, as we have seen, was at least as old as Vijayanagar itself.

The difference, however, between Vijayanagar and Madura cannot all be explained by accidental circumstances. Something must be ascribed to the time-spirit, something also to racial temperament. In some respects the Coromandel temples seem to us even more unfamiliar and remote than the earlier but comelier shapes of Vijayanagar architecture, or the still earlier naturalistic rock-sculptures of Mamallapuram. The art of both these places has often a quality which calls to us, as it were, in our own language, and which in later work seems to have wilted and shrunk at the release of an older and more sombre mood of history, a more outlandish and elemental strain of thought and custom. Is it Hellenism, that earlier purity, or is it youth, or the love of nature, or merely the universal language of ordered beauty? These qualities are not lacking in later Coromandel art, but they are puzzled and dwarfed and overshadowed by an awe that is akin to fear and madness.